

Nai Talim Nai Disha

**BASIC EDUCATION
new directions**

Bangalore, May 1999

National Council of Rural Institutes

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BASIC EDUCATION
new directions

Proceedings of a Consultation on
Nai Talim organised by the
National Council of Rural Institutes
at the Institute of Social and Economic Change,
Bangalore in May 1998.

NCRI is a non-profit registered society
devoted to promote *Nai Talim* of Mahatma Gandhi's vision.
It is sponsored by the Department of Education,
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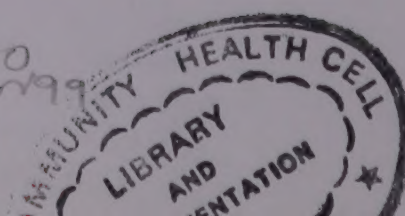
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PREFACE

National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) has been entrusted with the task of encouraging and aiding efforts to promote *Nai Talim* (basic education) as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi.

NCRI assembled a select group at Bangalore in May 1999 for consultation on elucidating the concept and steps required to give it a practical shape.

The proceedings of this consultation together with a summary and list of participants, are presented here for a wider sharing and soliciting suggestions.

L.C. Jain

Chairman, NCRI

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RURAL INSTITUTES

CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL

ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL AT ITS FIRST MEETING, 1909

I

PURPOSE

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RURAL INSTITUTES

Consultation at Bangalore

Thursday, 20th May, 1999

The Government of India set up the National Council of Rural Institutes [NCRI] in 1995 with the following background and objectives:

BACKGROUND

NPE 1986 as revised in 1992 laid specific emphasis on reorganising and strengthening the support system for rural Institutes. The Programme of Action [POA] 1992 to implement the NPE 1986/92 stated that a National Council for Rural Institutes [NCRI] should be set up for the purpose. Accordingly, the Educational Consultants India Ltd. [Ed. CIL], an autonomous educational consultancy organisation under the Department of Education, had been asked to prepare a policy paper on the basis of deliberations and recommendations of a Working Group under the Chairmanship of Dr. M. Aram, Member of Parliament, formerly Vice-Chancellor of the Gandhigram Rural Institute, Tamil Nadu. The major objective of the Council would be to co-ordinate and network research activities in the rural Institutes, to provide training and fund further training activities in the rural institutes, and to generate, through ground level studies, data and pragmatic indication to make Rural Development Policy more cost effective and relevant to the needs of rural society.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives for which the Council is established are to:

- a) promote rural higher education on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi's revolutionary ideas on education so as to take up challenges of micro-planning for transformation of rural areas as envisaged in NPE 1986 [as modified in 1992];
- b) consolidate network and develop institutions engaged in programmes of Gandhian Basic Education and Nai Talim;

- c] encourage other educational institutions and voluntary agencies to develop in accordance with Gandhian Philosophy of education;
- d] strengthen teacher training facilities for Gandhian Basic Education;
- e] design a variety of courses at tertiary level around emerging rural occupation;
- f] strengthen the content of all these institutions with emphasis on science and technology;
- g] encourage field-oriented courses of rural institutes; and
- h] promote research as a tool for social and rural development;
- i] promote extension services to the community through micro level planning;
- j] advise Government of India on all such matters pertaining to rural institutes as may be referred to it from time to time.

For one reason or another, NCRI has yet to land on the ground. It has had some consultations in this period to evolve a direction and focus. Friends who have participated in these consultations made valuable contributions, but NCRI was not able to take full advantage due to weaknesses in its own organisational set up. Understandably, this has more than disappointed several friends of NCRI. We are, however, a little better prepared now to avail of and apply advice emerging from a **consultation planned for Thursday, May 20th 1999 to be held at Institute of Social and Economic Change, Nagarbhavi, Bangalore - 560 072. (Tel: 91-80-3215468, and Fax: 91-80-3217008.)**

A summary of the main points emerging from past consultations were circulated separately.

The proposed consultation at Bangalore focused on three aspects:

- a] what needs to be done to enrich the general stream of school education - starting from the primary level in the rural areas, from the perspective of basic education?
- b] what measures should NCRI adopt to fulfil the above goal?
- c] what should be the approach and activities to strengthen existing institutional endeavours / experiments inspired by basic education philosophy; and to assimilate and disseminate widely their experience, treating them as resource centres.

Finally, the consultation is expected to provide specific / practical guidelines for NCRI both for the short and long term.

At the consultation, it was also proposed to receive an oral [or written] presentation from Visva Bharati University and Gandhigram Rural Institute of the progress made by them on the project supported by NCRI, minuted as follows:

“two pioneering Rural Institutes namely Gandhigram Rural Institute and Visva Bharati [Sri Niketan Institute] are in a position for preparing a significant Resource Book and materials on the basis of their past experience.”

*[The proposals of the two institutes were formally
approved on 14th March, 1997]*

The two institutes were requested to bring the materials developed by them to the meeting at Bangalore.

II

PROCEEDINGS

Mr. L.C. JAIN

First, my very warm word of welcome to all of you. This is a consultation and we have a business like workshop. I thought we will keep in mind the fact that while this Council has been set up to promote basic education, we know for a fact that, in spite of all the efforts of the last 50 years, no change or reform of any substantive character has been possible in education as a whole. It is an unmovable established system. Within that to find a little foothold or a toehold for basic education, which has been kept outside the door for the last 50 years, is a Herculean task. The only reason we continue at it is that though the task maybe Herculean, it is indispensable. We can make errors in our society and delays mean that the error might prove costly, but we have to keep some little flame going some where, that the idea might come alive.

Further encouragement to us is provided by the fact that Gandhiji did not think education as one compartment, non violence as another compartment, self reliance another. For him life was composite. But the way we have ordered and organised life after independence, both in terms of political and economical structures, we have willy nilly compartmentalised everything. Thus, the objective conditions for anything being tried for direction of basic education, in my view, did not exist. Because change requires not only policy but also the full participation of the community. Basic education to be really meaningful is not a conformist set formula to be delivered to every child. What Gandhiji said was, 'learn something about your own neighbourhood, your history, your culture, your resources - soil, water, vegetation, flowers, which meant it (basic education) was so specific. He was not pushing a pre-set curriculum down their throat, but broadening their horizon, their minds, and giving them a sense of self confidence and capacity to face life. Now whatever may have happened or not happened in the last 50 years, we can have many sessions to lament about that, but this one is not a lament session.

We can draw considerable encouragement from the fact that an effort is now being made for decentralisation or Panchayati Raj. That means essentially equipping ourselves with an institutional base at every village level across the country. We have not had this dynamic facility all of 50 years. This is the only network which can act as a countervailing power against departments controlling all our activities from above. This is no fault of their own. For, when you are a department based at the centre or state, you have no other option except to hand out: This is the formula, this is the format, these are the funds, this is the programme - take them and carry on. The room for anybody to learn from below in this system is suffocating.

The panchayati raj is now coming up. That is one reason why I have invited my very esteemed friend Professor Iqbal Gulati, who is heading the State

Planning Board in Kerala. Kerala is one state which has taken the decentralisation programme of the 73rd amendment very seriously. More than that, their documents talk of people's campaign. It is not an administrative decentralisation. They are mobilising the community. In fact they have organised what are called 'neighbourhood groups', where every single household numbering about 30 to 40 are joined together and involved in the thinking and decision-making process at the grassroot level. To me, this provides a very encouraging positive support, i.e. it alters the given objective situation and gives scope for entertaining the hope that perhaps we may be able to bring in some change this time. But I have no illusion about what we can do to influence and alter the existing primary school educational system. I think we can leave that alone for the time being. But we can get to it from the outside, that is, outside the class room. We can introduce new impulses and activities around the school. For example, through our friends from the community of scientists who are here from ISRO, from TIDE and from the Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science. They have opened new vistas which are extremely relevant for developing a wholesome local plan. To incorporate a view of your soil, water, vegetation and other endowments. This is the sphere in which the children at the school level (outside their rigid system) can be involved. So if we link up these scientific truths with the system of panchayats, we would break a new ground. We would be hearing from Prof. Gulati what he regards as a possibility there. Then also from the scientists on what are the activities e.g. in terms of mapping, remote sensing data being interpreted, ground verification carried out, All these are very very essential for any meaningful planning at the area level. The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution says that each the village panchayat shall prepare an area plan for economic development and social justice. How do they prepare that? They must be helped to know the area in all its details, for which they are to plan. Again, the environmental concerns become a part of the same. They are not a separate compartment. The local plan has to be a very harmoniously compiled thing.

Even if we cannot change or experiment on a wider scale, some selected efforts have continually to be made in the country. Thanks to esteemed friends like Dr. Ram Lal Parekh, Chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapeet, and other eminent distinguished universities such as Viswa Bharati, and the Gandhigram, which are doing tremendous work and Rajiv Vora from the Gandhi Peace Foundation, who have kept this thinking flame of basic education idea, so that we can then, given the institutional support, given the new knowledge that may come from our scientific community, we marry that together with our institutions which are engaged in this kind of discipline.

So I feel that although the situation is hopeless, the chapter is not final. The challenge before this workshop is to work out what are the leads in terms of

institutional programmes, in terms of experimental programmes, in terms of bring in the school at the panchayat level even if outside the room, into this activity. The ultimate result would be that while basic education may not get delivered under the roof of the school for the next 3 to 5 years, we can demonstrate what are the things that can be done outside the class room, which will, even if not complete the picture, at least broaden it. And then we might be in a better position to influence the established school system.

Informally everybody tells me 'why are you pursuing this hopeless thing. There is no future for basic education as indeed they say there is no future for education itself in the country'. But then it is our country. We have to fight for its future tooth and nail and more we lose, more grit we have to demonstrate, not less. So with these words, with your permission, I will invite Prof. Gulati first to share his thoughts with us on his perspective and his advice as to what we might do and then I hope we will have a full discussion.

PROFESSOR IQBAL GULATI

While I am very grateful to Lakshmi Jain for asking me to come and share my thoughts with you, I must confess I have absolutely no illusions that whatever I may have to say on what we are trying to do in Kerala has very little immediate bearing on what you have met here to discuss. And still, you may find what we are doing of some interest.

Let me spend a few minutes in saying what we are doing in Kerala. When the present Left government came to power in 1996, following their election manifesto, they decided that a substantial portion of the state plan would be devolved to the local bodies. Now devolution can be undertaken in a number of forms. But what we, in the State Planning Board, recommended to the government, and the government accepted our recommendation, was that whatever the state government decided to devolve on the local body, should be devolved in the form of a block grant. That is the first thing. In other words, the local body decides how to spend that block grant. They would prepare their own development plans and have them approved through the procedure as laid down bylaw, and finally send them to the State Planning Board, to be integrated with the state plan.

In the process, a very major underlying decision was to give up an incremental approach to decentralisation. The risks involved were many, but the risks were taken. We did not say that the first year, we would devolve 5 % and the next year, 15 % and the year after, 25 % and so on. The state government decided, no doubt on the recommendation of the State Planning Board, that between 35 and 40 % of the state plan would be allocated to the local body and blocks.

This decision was part of the process of devolving functions and powers to the local body. For instance, it would be of immediate interest to you that primary schools were transferred to gram panchayats, and high schools were transferred to district panchayats. Just as in the area of health for instance, primary health centres were transferred to the gram panchayats. As also the sub centres of minor irrigation in a number of areas. Almost all the 29 areas listed in the 73rd amendment of the Constitution and all the 18 areas listed in the 74th amendment were transferred with some amount of clear definition about what institutions would correspondingly?

This was supposed to take effect from the beginning of the ninth plan. The constituted government came to power in 1996. The first ten months of 1996-97, it was decided, would be devoted to the convening of gram sabhas. We did not ask them what projects to include in their plan, but we did insist the gram sabhas must convene in order for people to participate. They could also indicate what development priorities they have and report to the State Planning Board through the district, what was the amount of extent of participation not only in overall quantity but also in terms of SC/ST participation and women's participation. We also circulated guidelines to all the gram panchayats and other local bodies, that in the conducting of the gram sabha, they should not spend more than 45 minutes to 1 hour on the inauguration, and that they should divide themselves into 10 to 12 groups where they can discuss the sectorwise issues within their gram, because different villages will have different issues - for instance, a fishing village would want to have a particular group discussing fishing. In those parts of Kerala where paddy growing is a major crop, they would want to have a group discussing just the issues of paddy culture. But we said three groups must be formed. One, on SC/ST issues, one on women development and the third on resource mobilisation. These three groups they must form in addition to the sectoral and sub sectoral groups that they may choose. Here I must also mention that the first gramsabha meetings were attended by practically all the ministers. They went round to see for themselves how the gramsabha meetings were conducted. I remember Shri E.M.S. Namboodiripad personally went and visited 4-5 gramsabha meetings in Thiruvananthapuram district. A couple of them I myself accompanied him.

We needed also to ensure at the same time, that in these gram sabha meetings they don't waste their time. So we went about concurrently setting up a whole cadre of voluntary resource persons.

Now we had an advantage in Kerala, which was the total literacy movement we had earlier. Although Kerala has been taking pride in the fact that literacy has been high in Kerala, still there were substantial numbers of people who were not educated. And under this total literacy movement, it had been possible

to mobilise over 50,000 workers in the whole state covering practically all length and breadth of Kerala, who again worked totally voluntarily. We had that advantage. We knew who these people were, their names and their addresses. So we could tap them for our purpose and say 'why don't you now come forward and help the local body to conduct their meetings'. They had to be first given orientation. We asked the local bodies to send us the names of the people whom they think could be good resource persons. We just told them to 'try to see that they are either graduates or activists who had been engaged in developmental activities and so on'.

We were able to mobilise for our purposes, over 100,000 persons in the whole state, and conduct a three-day programme of orientation for them about what they should be doing when the gramsabha meetings were held and how they can help them come forward with ideas, with priorities, what part of projects and programs they would like to take up and so on. In a sense, you can say that what we started doing was simultaneously a program of training and orientation. We had the help of not only institutes which I am sure exist practically in every state, but also two major institutions in Kerala, one the Kerala Institute of Local Administration in Trichur and the other, the State Institute for Development. But in addition to that, what we did in the State Planning Board was to convene a number of meetings with non government organisations and voluntary institutions, and pleaded with them to help us in coming forward as resource persons and organisations.

Although we had thought that 9 months would be sufficient for us to start the planning process in earnest, right from the beginning I must confess we did not. There were so many hiccups. We could only get the plans approved and ready for implementation by August-September 1997. And the first instalment of the amounts allocated could be released only then. In other words, we lost almost 3-4 months. In the second year again, we thought we would be able to start earlier, on the basis of our experience in the first year. Even then we did not, right from the start. We found that the plan procedures that we had laid down were such that the local bodies always found it hard to stick to the deadlines. Our original idea was that the campaign mode of the movement that we thought we needed in 1996, would be necessary to kept going for only one year. Gradually we realised that that had to be kept up even in the subsequent years. Even for the third year, we realised that the campaign mode could not be given up. Therefore we felt that what we probably did not put sufficient emphasis upon, was the building of institutions along with the process of running a movement. We were not institutionalising here.

So now, we are trying to institutionalise the arrangement. When I use the term 'institutionalise', I do not mean just institutions in the narrow sense of the word.

It means that procedures and other things must be clearly spelt out, training programmes must be purposefully institutionalised: where should the training take place, which regions of the state would conduct what sort of programme, who are the people who would be involved in this programme etc. Now our effort is directed towards forming institutional arrangements, so that hopefully before the end of the Ninth Plan, institutions would exist to which the local bodies can go to and say, 'we need help in these areas'. How do we go about this?

We have now decided that as it was so useful to us that we could draw upon these voluntary cadre of people who had been involved in the 'total literacy movement'; and who therefore get the programme going right from the first day, this sort of arrangement that we decided upon, namely calling upon people to come forward and give their services voluntarily to local bodies, has to be continued as devolution takes root. It cannot be just that for the first few years, these resource persons will offer their services voluntarily. The arrangement has to be continued. Now for this to be so, we have to ensure that voluntary expertise can be continued to be mobilised by the local body. In some respects, may be Kerala is different. I have visited quite a number of villages around Kerala. What struck me was that unlike other parts of our country, it is not unusual to come across people who may have worked in very high level capacities during their working career, but who have gone back to their villages on retirement and set up house there. I met science teachers, accountants, scientists, people who have held very high positions in state and central governments, who are most willing to come forward and help their local body. And all that was needed was to somehow or the other involve them in what is going on. For instance, we needed some expert advice in the area of water harvesting: In Palghat area, a former member of the Central Water Commission came forward and today we have an arrangement where he is offering technical advice. He is now on our State level body and we take his advice and make use of his expertise in whichever village there is a programme. In Kerala we have 44 rivers and Kerala otherwise should have abundant water. But if you travel in Kerala, not more than 20 % of the villages have an assured supply of drinking water. Whichever villages I have gone to, their priorities list water supply with the highest ranking.

So our attempt now is to make sure that for the next plan and the plans to follow, this arrangement of calling upon experts in different areas living in the villages or in the cities, to help the local bodies draw up their plan, becomes a fairly permanent system. In a sense when we started in 1996, we didn't start from scratch. What had happened was that after the passing of the two amendments to the Constitution which in turn obliged state governments to pass or revise their existing local body legislation, there was a movement to ensure

that the local legislation, Panchayati Raj and the Nagarpalika Bill in Kerala truly reflected the spirit behind these amendments and did not just reflect the 73rd and 74th amendments. By only following the forms and not spirit of these two amendments, the state governments would retain all the powers, and the local body, duly elected every five years, would have no powers.

In spite of all the provisions of these two amendments, there was a real movement in Kerala, which I must very modestly claim to have participated in though as an academic, along with many other academics. It was during that period that I could visit the whole of Kerala. It was part of a movement to rouse the people and demand that the original draft legislation could be considerably improved upon and something better introduced. I think we succeeded to a considerable extent on this. So what happened in 1996 was really a follow up movement. We could really build upon that and make sure that the new government which came to power in 1996 really took steps to ensure a genuine devolution of power and finance.

L.C. JAIN

Thank you, Iqbal. Although you were pessimistic about the relevance to us of your experience, you have given us the key: the mobilization of all public resources is necessary if you really want something significant to be done. You have done that for panchayats. Likewise we would like to use the resources of the panchayat and other groups, Dr. Revathi Narayanan, for instance, Mahila Samakhya which has done a great deal to give us a taste of women power. Their participation in anything you want to do is of extreme importance. Women in panchayats can demand a change in their educational system. We were at a panchayat meeting in Kerala. They were passing their budget, which included Rs.25,000 for setting up a social history museum of their village. I think this kind of enlightenment you don't find even in New Delhi; the pride in their social institutions that they want passed on to other generations.

Mr. Srinivasamurthy is with us for an hour, and he will now share his thoughts with us.

MR. SRINIVASAMURTHY

I am indeed thankful that you have found it useful to call me to participate in consultations which involve such very distinguished personalities as are assembled around this table. I would basically touch upon two points, considering that many of the participants in this consultation are from outside the state. It may not be entirely a waste of their time if I were to supplement

Dr. Gulati's presentation by adding a few points about the Panchayati Raj system in Karnataka itself and how we have gone about doing roughly the same thing.

Then I would mention a couple of points about what we feel about the topic under discussion today, i.e. basic education in the rural context. In 1987, Karnataka introduced a Panchayat Raj system which was basically modelled on the framework given in the Ashok Mehta committee report. I find that this is one of the reports very rarely mentioned these days. I would feel that's rather unfortunate, since this report gives an extremely lucid account of what government at the lower level below the state should be. This report had envisaged mainly a two paired system-at district level the Zilla Parishad then one level very close to the villages which they call the Mandal Panchayat. The state passed a legislation in 1983, but it took a long time for the legislation to be approved by the centre. It received the President's assent in 1985, I think, and then in 1987 we were actually able to hold elections and constitute these bodies. We had about two and a half thousand Mandal Panchayat in the state and 19 Zilla Parishads. We also had a kind of body at the Taluk level called the Taluk Panchayat Committee in all the 175 Taluks.

I think I won't be wrong in saying that perhaps for the first time, the concept of Gram Sabha was given a statutory expression in the Karnataka legislation. Earlier Gram Sabhas were not unknown - after all, that's an institution that's been with us for some time. But as a statutory forum, it was, to my knowledge, constituted for the first time in Karnataka in the Karnataka Zilla Parishad Act of 1983. As Dr. Gulati mentioned, this incremental approach to devolving powers and functions to the Panchayat is extremely risky because the political climate is always changing. The commitment of the state governments and even the Centre cannot be taken for granted to remain at the same level over every long period. We are seeing this happening in our own state. The levels of commitment keep fluctuating from year to year or government to government. Therefore what the Karnataka government did in 1987, with the benefit of hindsight, was a very sound thing. They practically hived off all branches of development administration upto the district level, to the Zilla Parishads. What Kerala government has done now by giving away huge tons of states responsibilities to the Gram Panchayats. The Karnataka government mentioned it a little differently. They gave away these responsibilities in favour of the Zilla Parishads- the district level governments. They also gave the full charge of the administration of all the development departments to the elected bodies. So much so that all the development departments were treated to be as Zilla Parishad departments, not State government departments anymore. The agriculture department was the Zilla Parishad agricultural department. The

engineering department was the Zilla Panchayat engineering division. The education dept was that of the Zilla Parishad. The health dept was that of the Zilla Parishad and all administrative control over the functionaries in those organisations, in those departments vested with the Zilla Parishads - we are talking about something like 300,000 functionaries working in all these departments - were placed under the control of these elected bodies at the district level. Their disciplinary authorities were the Zilla Parishads. They were the authorities for all kinds of minor administrative control, not only administrative control but also the financial control. All the budgets for every department was decided by the Zilla Parishad: what should be the amount for X or Y scheme of the district plan was a matter left to the Zilla Parishads. And all these employees were no longer treated as government servants. To begin with they were treated as employees on deputation to the Zilla Parishads. Functions of about 22 departments were transferred lock, stock and barrel along with all the assets like schools, hospitals and equipment in those institutions. The horticulture farms, the agricultural farms and the equipment from the engineering department as well. All of that was given over to the Zilla Parishads. And I am talking of the situation which prevailed long before the 73rd amendment came the horizon, in the year 1987.

In the matter of transfer of funds, I think this 40 % is a magical figure. 40% of the states' plan in 1987-88 was given over to the Zilla parishads. But I must confess that we did it a little differently. We did not give it as a block grant to the Zilla Parishads. We said, 'this is the money you have, these are the schemes that you have we have obliged to implement some of these schemes though you have the discretion of altering the allocation for different schemes depending upon your own perception of local names and priorities. In the year 1987, the total transfer to the panchayats both of the planned and non planned heads, was over 900 crores of rupees. And this situation continues to this day. Last year the amount transferred to the panchayats in Karnataka was of the order of 3000,800 crores of rupees, which was a little over 36% of the states total gross owned revenue. This implies that 36% of the State Finance Commission's revenue went to the panchayati raj institutions. While all other states have had their 1st state finance commission's, the state of Karnataka if I may submit with some modesty was probably the first to think of a statutory finance commission for local bodies and we had our first finance Commission headed by Dr. Honnavar which submitted its reports in 1989. But the level of commitment for strengthening these panchayats was so high that by that time the recommendations of the finance commission were virtually outdated you know they became outdated in the same year of the report being received because the grants given next year to the panchayats were a little in excess of the amount the finance commission had recommended. In fact, the second state

finance commission, on the basis of various calculations they made, said you set apart 36% of your resources for the local bodies. Out of that 85% was to be given to the Panchayat Raj institutions, 15% to the urban local bodies. Now we found to our dismay that this resulted in reduction of 200 crores to the Panchayat Raj institutions because the state was already giving more than that to these institutions.

Now the issue that Dr. Gulati mentioned I'm indeed very thankful to you for focussing on this issue; it is one which has been engaging our state's attention as well. It is the issue of having institutions on a sustained basis. It is very difficult to initiate a movement and even more difficult to sustain it for 2 or 3 years, but virtually Impossible to keep any movement going for more than 3-4 years unless you have extraordinary personality and extraordinary circumstances prevailing in a state. But local government is something which ultimately has to boil down to institutions which don't need to be sustained by personalities and movements, but which have to be carried on by the local people in the normal course of their day to day activities. Therefore we have been continuously reviewing and refining the system of administration that we have handed down to the Zilla Panchayats. Even last week we showed a detailed set of guide lines as to how Gram Sabhas have to be held. Even though I said that we were the first state to incorporate Gram Sabha in the statute, we are still in the process of perfecting the guide lines which need to be given to the Gram Panchayats. Gram Sabhas should be made more functional and at the same time more sustainable as an institution in the long run. An important problem that we have come across is the context of our education in the rural areas. All primary and secondary education is with the Panchayat Raj institutions now. Only higher education is with the state directly. After a boy or girl has gone through this kind of schooling and even some degree of college education. The main question that arises particularly in the rural context is what is this education good for? We had a small survey conducted in our neighbouring district of Tumkur in the villages, as to how many people whom have passed matric or equivalent examination or higher examinations, live are in the villages and do not seem to have any occupation were the men. This survey produced a figure of about 55,000 in 1 district in the rural areas only. We did not venture into the urban areas, and thus did not include all the Taluk headquarters etc. Now by that calculation we have a million or 1 and a half million young people below 35, in the 18 to 35 age group, who have had at least 10 years of education in the hope that they will get some employment in a urban sector or in a non farm kind of sector. That's what this education was supposed to give them. All those who have not been successful in getting any kind of employment in any city or within the village in the non-farm sector, and who are not interested or who are not required in the agricultural operations in their

villages, are even now living off their parents income. You can imagine what it does to the self esteem of a young man or young lady. If he or she does not have any appreciable source of income of his own or her own, and has to depend upon the labour of the other members of the family, they might become a major social problem because they are all the time discussing what is happening in this one's house or that one's house and becoming busy bodies because they don't have any useful vocation. We are worried that this perhaps is a time bomb ticking away in our rural areas. I am sure the situation in many other states would roughly be the same because we have so many schools and so many colleges opened in all parts of the state, and all the curriculum in those schools seems to be aimed at only making them literate, if at all that, and probably equipping them for jobs of clerks and things like that. There are not that many jobs of clerks going any longer.

The state administration is now saying we are not going to recruit any more people. The Centre is in the process of reducing posts at various levels. So these people have reached a dead end they are not equipped to do any activity which they can do in the village. I've heard that in China they follow a policy that you can leave the land but you cannot leave the village. So you need not do agriculture because there is surplus labour in the agriculture sector. But there are avenues given in the rural areas for doing something else, and very major part of that country's exports consist of products made in the rural areas; rural industrialisation is a major phenomenon today. We have not got anything like that in our country. We have this huge reservoir of man power but we do not know how to re orient them to make them useful to society and to enable them to earn a decent living without having to migrate to a city.

I do not know if today's consultation could address this issue. Not just of going back to the children in villages and making them aware of their environment and the way people around them and things like that, but tackling the issue of these young people and making their learning somehow relevant to the environment in which they are living and making them useful to the society in which they are living today. We try to involve some institutions in giving some kind of useful skills to these young people. The university of agricultural sciences here took on a few batches of young people without asking them to buy text books or read anything in a class room. They were put through practical training in some trades like horticultural nurseries and scientific nurseries. There is so much of demand for horticultural saplings in the villages, while only cities have that kind of nurseries, that it would be useful if these kind of nurseries can be privately run by young people in the villages. Many young people were trained in the bakery products, how to make bread and various other things. And some young people are still being trained in modern dairy farming. Not

the usual business of taking 1 or 2 buffaloes round the common lands but maybe stall feeding these cows and getting a good income out of that kind of an operation. We are trying to get these young people interested in a number of other occupations so that even while staying in their villages and making partial use of the resources that their agricultural households already have, they can make a descent living out of a slightly non-agricultural kind of an occupation.

Sir we would be thankful if this issue could find place in your consultations and if some institutional arrangements could be thought of for finding a solution to this. The state government has been looking around for ways of setting up training institutions which do not emphasize text book learning but which will make people learn skills of a very high order so that they can produce not only for their own village or for their own consumption, because I think subsistence kind of farming or subsistence oriented occupations are no longer the 'in thing' in this atmosphere of globalization. People, even the villages, have to produce for distant markets. So can we set up institutions which will enable these young people to produce goods and services which will be valued in markets far away from their own place because it is only those markets which can give them very good return for their efforts? I am sure the pre-occupation of the ministry of rural areas and employment is also by and large one of finding solutions to this kind of problem because they have a number of huge programmes for poverty elevation where increasingly the focus is on young people in the rural areas. How to get them usefully employed so that they contribute to the society instead of becoming a major problem there. Sir, I'm once again very grateful to you for this opportunity to present these few thoughts before you. Thank you very much.

L.C. JAIN

Thank you Srinivasan — You have truly taken us a step further and closer, the moment you say that after 10 years of education 55,000 of these boys and girls between the age of 18 and 35 in one district and for the state as a whole 1.5 million, don't know where to go. The cry of those who talk about basic education is not that you rectify the process late. Whatever level you start, the entire educational system must equip our children to be able to relate themselves to life and its both occupational opportunities and cultural dimensions. So you have rightly mentioned the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment. That will give my good friend Mr. Dasgupta the assurance that our invitation to him was not to drag him away from the heat of Delhi only, but that it has a direct relevance to what we propose to do. I think these 2 presentations have made very clear in my mind what are some of the concrete things that we can attempt to towards the end of this consultation. So thank you.

Shri. RAMLAL PARIKH

Gujarat Vidyapith

The foremost tasks of the NCRI are to unfold the revolutionary nature of Gandhian ideas, create a status report on Nai Talim and revive the nature of rural institutions. We must also emphasise that development and education are taken together, particularly for teachers' training. In Gujarat, all the 75 teacher training institutions are non-government voluntary organizations, not run by the government. Gujarat is the only government which allows voluntary agencies to run training institutions. Therefore in the status report Gujarat would need a spacial mention or in a sense, a special profile because there are 500 post basic education institutions already recognised on their 100% grant, but which have some things compulsory in that different from the normal school, including a daily non religious congregation. 40,000 students appear in Post Basic schools and all of them go for higher education in rural institutes. There are 34 rural institutes in Gujarat. But all of them, before the council could become active, have now one by one -except Gujarat Vidyapith started to be affiliated to universities because of a perceived recognition problem. It was not so though, since the Gujarat government gave them equal recognition for jobs. Almost 80% of the TDO's and BDO's are products of basic education there.

In spite of that, this glamour of a university degree has caused a serious set back, and these institutions are therefore getting affiliated, one by one. They say our urban students have left out, unless you affiliate these people, they will not get jobs. A committee or a mechanism is needed in order to prepare status reports on all such basic education institutions - like Gandhigram or Kasturbagram, or the ones in Indore and Bihar - in order to check on their difficulties and what type of recognition they receive.

The next point is that the Hindustani Talim Sangh which is the main body of basic education, and the outcome of the 1937 conference, needs to be revived. If you want Nai Talim as a major focus of this council, which is in the policy expected of us, then Hindustani Talim Sangh needs to be revived and its revival is possible in two ways. One is that it should be supported in a functional way to maintain its secretariate and preserve all the relevant documents. They should be taken out, preserved, edited and reprinted, so that our intellectual resources for the NCRI, which are available, do not vanish.

Secondly, we need to revive the training centre of the Hindustani Talim Sangh, although it has ceased to exist for the last 40 years. There is no harm in reviving it, we can still revive it in Sevagram - the training centre of trainers for Nai Talim teachers. This is not teachers training, it is for trainers of teacher's training, who train the primary teachers or secondary teachers wherever it is possible.

Next comes the issue where the committees have recommended SUPW - Socially Useful Productive Work as a part of secondary education. It was introduced in thousands of schools in 1979-82. It was implemented by NCRT - Das Guptaji knows that it has been given up. So linking education with work - productive work - was the link with the development process.

Now the next is the UGC and NCRI relationship. UGC has several institutions in rural areas doing rural work but some of them have felt that NCRI has the money. Rural higher education is our job, so let us get that money transferred here and we will distribute it. Now NCRI has to make up its mind. How do we manage the UGC and NCRI relationship because recognition is in their hands and money is in our hands? And for recognition, we have to take a stand that if we do all this experimentation, then recognition should not be challenged. For that, a lot of dialogue is required between those who are managing the Vice Chancellors's institutions, of for which I have been the President for so many years; all of them have to be brought together to talk so that differences of opinion are not raised later on again.

The next question is agriculture. Agricultural institutions think that this is their job and why should NCRI worry about it? All Vice Chancellors have told me this is an agricultural university's job, why do you bother about that, rural agriculture is our job and we are doing it, we are rural universities. This NCRI is used to wasting of money - how do you answer that? You have to reply to all these questions which are already under debate.

Next question was what was rightly stated by somebody as the problem of linking the rural schools. A three tier structure is possible - structurally and institutionally, though how do we approach it? One is rural higher institutes - 32 old rural institutes who have merged in the universities can perhaps be revived not brought back out but their identities can be revived. Secondly, about 500-600 schools exist that have merged into the normal system. These deal with crafts, because the basic emphasis of the gandhian system is the correlation with life with development with community. I have suggested elsewhere seminar that several schools in Britain and America are choosing themselves to be converting into community schools, and why should we not try something like that? For instance, take the Gram Sabha; the Gram Sabha meeting is parallel, the school does not have any relationship with Gram Sabha, and Gram Sabha does not have any relationship with School. Why can they not be brought together at the village level, at the micro level, at the grassroots level? So the question therefore would be the question of the occupational pattern determining the students. All these questions would be taken care of if there is a community school where the parents participate in the school management, not in terms of finance but in terms of programme management. The students

participate in the panchayat management. This model has been worked out in several places in different states. So these institutions can be used as experimental laboratories to test some ideas, find out their solutions and disseminate them. There is a total lack of inter communication between these institutions. Totally lack. Nobody knows anybody. Madurai doesn't know Vidyapith, Vidyapith doesn't know Madurai etc etc. Front line institutions can be brought together to talk to each other and find out what they do and how to transfer learning to others.

Then the last thing, I would appeal that today's discussion should lead us to identify 7-8 items on an agenda which we can transmit to the National Council, which may be adopted and then implemented with several committees and Chairmans - it can then be operational, and each agenda can be separately determined; I think the last time needs to be recovered very soon.

I had given up total hope. When I received the letter I could not believe that it was about NCRI. I had to telephone Mr. Jain to confirm it. So little has happened in the last 2-3 years. It is nobody's fault. But some mechanism is required for it to function well as an autonomous body. It needs institutional mechanisms to run and somebody full time running it well as a member secretary. I don't think that a location of an office and an ad is enough for that unless one or two people working on all these points going around the country. Like any other commission, this should be made as important as UGC only then I think will it have an impact.

So with this few things, I would suggest from today's agenda all other things maybe culled out into 5 points, which can be taken into account and this agenda for action can be formulated. We will bring out a new paper, which in 3-4 pages summarise it, our action for agenda, and the mechanisms that we propose to follow in the institutional manner.

I think it is a significant and vital meeting and I have the greatest regard for this. The kind of ideas which we are discussing are so vital for the future of our country, you can hardly ignore it. I can assure Mr. Jain that the various institutions in our country with which I am associated, are looking for actively functioning in rural development programmes if the opportunity, linkages and connections are established. We need to work together as equal partners. We can choose at least 25-30 institutions, 5-6 of which are already sitting here and Gujarat has a membership of 500 schools and 40,000 students. That is an experiment in the whole country which is fully recognised it has not faced any legal problem and a law, a bill has been prepared in Gujarat about Nai Talim which has not passed yet We need to lend support to it.

Thank You.

Dr. REVATHI NARAYANAN
Mahila Samakhya — Karnataka

It is really my privilege to be presenting the work of Mahila Samakhya before such an august audience. I am also slightly hesitant because Laksahmiji has asked me to speak so early in the programme when there are many more senior people. But I did hear in the morning that protocol was not the order of the day. So I will quickly try and familiarise you with the work of Mahila Samakhya.

We are a programme for the empowerment of women under the Human Development Resource Ministry, currently working in 7 states of the country including, interestingly enough, Kerala. The experience in Karnataka has been very good. It started in Karnataka in 1989 and we are working in 7 districts now. 6 of them are in the developmentally deprived districts of Northern Karnataka.

The main strategy of the programme is to work through the formation of women's collectives. These women are selected from amongst the poorest of the poor. These are the women who bear the triple oppression of gender, caste and class. They are the women that all development processes have passed by. Education has passed them by and there was very little hope for them for better life till in a sense the Mahila Samakhya Sangha started.

In fact when I got the invitation to this meeting, I was reading through the notes and seeing what aspects of our work would directly fit into the discussion of today. I had a brief discussion with Mr. L.C. Jain in the morning and there are three immediate experiences of ours, which I would like to bring to your notice. One is, basically regarding the area plan for village development and social justice. I think it is the social justice angle of development that Mahila Samkhya is very clearly focusing on. To give you a ground level example with the district primary education programme in Karnataka, it is extremely active in Karnataka and it also has a very strong gender focus.

Some of the work we are doing with them I would like to describe now. We started in Bellary district about a year and half ago and the way we started was a little different from the strategy we used in the older districts. In the older districts, we used to have our village level facilitators, going to the poorest hamlets and starting discussions with the women there. From those discussions, the Sangha would emerge. But here we started through a different strategy and that is principally because we found that through the earlier strategy, we were not able to break across caste lines. So when you say 'poorest of the poor', you are invariably focusing on 25 or 30 harijan or SC households or you are focusing on the tribal communities which were not able to break across the

caste barriers. In Bellary we had a very interesting experience because we started with DPEP in the micro planning exercise. Now in the micro planning exercise, which everyone here would be familiar with, there is a mapping done for educational resources and educational levels, liabilities, and possibilities in the entire village. When they do this, they also focus on drop outs. They break up into gender disaggregated data of how many households do not have the girls going to schools, where there are girl drop outs, how many places there are girls who have reached some levels of higher education. These are in fact some of the criteria for the selection of teachers. Invariably this exercise ends up with the Gram Sabha, where the data that is found in the 3 or 4 day micro planning exercises is presented in the Gram Sabha. It is very interesting that immediately there is a focus on things like the households where women are being beaten up, the households where girls have dropped out of school, where there are bigamous marriages - all kinds of issues that are social justice issues and which are gender discriminatory, are highlighted in these Gram Sabhas. Then from this, the discussion goes on to why it is important that every member of the community, particularly women and girls who are deprived, should come in to this mainstream of development.

Now one of the criteria for selecting teachers is that it must be a woman, preferably. The first preference is given to a scheduled caste woman if a person of that level of education is available. Then it goes on to a woman of some other category. Only if these two categories are not available, you can move to selection of a woman from some other category or community. This has been a very good exercise for us; because it is at these Gram Sabhas that the Sanghas are started. And then you are talking about gender discrimination across class and caste.

Referring to a point made by Professor Ramlal Parekh, when he talked about the divergence between the community and the educational institution, it is also through this scheme of having the village education committees where these poor Sangha women are also members of village education committee, that they are able to put forth their demands and their perspectives into planning for the school. When I say all this, let me not give a rosy picture. Much of this is in thought and in concept and in the attempt to implement. In certain areas, there has definitely been a very honest attempt to implement these ideas. The sheer fact that you do have room for poor women in the Village Education Committees has been a major step forward in this programme.

A second aspect of our work which I would like to highlight is what is known under the Mahila Samakhya as the Mahila Sikshan Kendras. In all the states we have Mahila Sikshan Kendras, there are basically 2 streams one is for having bridge courses and short term courses for girls who are drop outs of the formal

system to see that they can pass their 7th std exam, or their 10th std exam or they can develop some vocational skills. The other one is to look at what I would consider more as life skills related to basic education. So in these short term courses you could have an upgradation of their literacy skills which makes a big difference. Even if you have a 15 day camp for teenagers who knew a little bit of reading and writing and you have one intense camp where they upgrade their literacy and numeracy skills, it pays off vastly when they go back to their community because they go back there and help in village level activities that involve literacy and numeracy. They may become numeracy volunteers. They may become volunteers who help our sanghas maintain their accounts, their documentation and in this sense they are helping the women's groups to function better.

Now in these MSKs - the Mahila Shikshan Kendras - we also have training programmes for women who want to stand for Panchayats. We have training programmes for health workers for traditional health, for herbal medicine. Now again the focus of basic education that you talk about are skills that women already have, that people already have. And skills that are related to their lives every day. So on the one hand, you are talking about an insufficiency of health care through the public health system. But you already have a wealth of knowledge in traditional medicine which women are the repositories of. So these skills are enhanced through training programmes and through actively helping women to exploit these skills; some of them are even using them for economic advancement. One thing that I must emphasize about Mahila Samakya is that it becomes a basket of activities because when you're talking about empowerment of women, you cannot focus on one or the other. So there is a little bit of everything that one is doing : literacy, Panchayat Raj, health, economic activities, groups linking to government programmes. There is a whole basket of activities. So in a sense we are also stretched very thin but we also are able to demonstrate that a focussed women's group can achieve all these things. Now a third stream of activity that we are into which I think is very important for this meeting to take on board is that somewhere in this curriculum or syllabus that you talk about for basic education there has to be a very strong emphasis on gender studies. At the NFE centres in the village, people come to the evening classes and there is a very strong component of gender sensitization, of the awareness of how you treat your mother, how you treat your father, very simple things like working out how many hours in a day your mother works and how many hours per day your father works. Why is there this difference, do you want to propagate it, why is it only your sister who washes the vessels after eating, why do you run out and play? So these are very beautiful and simple exercises related to daily life that we emphasise in our NFE centres. Now

we have also developed two gender training manuals, one of them is extremely interesting. It is called KUSUMA and we worked it out with young rural men. Now these men have been our NFE centre teachers. They found themselves ill equipped to handle the subject of gender in the classes, so they wanted training on issues of gender. So with them we worked out a very simple set of twenty exercises which are a very very preliminary understanding of gender discrimination and this is being used as a course book for cluster resource and block resources centres of DPEP Karnataka. Just two months ago they were printed on a large scale and they are being used. People have found them very useful because they are really rooted in the village idiom, in the rural idiom; there are simple exercises like one exercise on proverbs and swear words. And interestingly enough swear words based on women seem to be very common in all the languages, European, English, Kannada, Hindi; pardoning the august presence of many people - the example is 'Son of a Bitch' - and a whole exercise was done with this. It is there in Hindi, it is there in Kannada and it is there in English, it is there in French. The exercise was to talk about people saying that if a quarrel is with me, why should my mother be brought into it. So the whole exercise is based on simple things like this. When I use vocabulary like this, what am I doing with my close female relatives, what am I saying about my mother, and my sister, and my wife and my brother. Exercises like this has very powerful effect of bringing about social changes, in small little areas and really they should snowball into something more and the impact of having lessons like this in basic education curricula will be tremendous.

Right now in our text books, there is very little focus on things like this, on the kind of language that you use at home, the language that is currently in public places; these I think are very important contributions that Mahila Samakhya is making.

We also have on the justice agenda, several things designed to enhance the esteem and the recognition of poor women and their learning and I think that is closely related to what we are talking about the basic education. Because if we talk from the simple to the complex, from the known to the unknown, it is really what Mahila Samakhya is focussing on.

I have a couple of copies of our annual report which people maybe interested in learning about. I will leave it here and I will be very grateful if you like to know more about the programme, please write to us, we will be only too happy to send you documents. I am very grateful for having this opportunity to speak to you about our work.

Thank you.

L.C. JAIN

Thank you Revathi. You have fulfilled our expectations; not only will we have your annual report, but we are going to have an annual alliance with this kind of work. And as we can see, this kind of work is also part of the human resource development ministry. Within the big effort, it is the question of getting them all together to pool in one direction. Before I call Jitender, we have a friend here from ISRO. And when I was talking to Arumugam - they have also been trying ways to make their scientific achievements applicable to, and available to development. Would you take a few minutes and give us an update of that?

GANESH RAJ

I am Ganesh Raj from Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), I am working in a wing called the National Natural Resources management system which was set up in 1983 for optimally managing the natural resources of our country using the advanced technique of remote sensing. Here I will just explain a few fundamentals so that it will become easy for the audience to understand it. Because remote sensing is a collection of information about an object without any physical contact. Our eyes are the best example: we can collect information of any object without any physical contact and we use the visible part of the electro magnetic spectrum. And this technique evolved from 1850s using aerial photos and from the launch of satellite by America in 1972. It further boosted up when we landed our own satellite, that is the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite in 1988, of course now we have launched five satellites in that series, and have the best satellite in the world, the Indian Remote Satellite (IRS IC and ID) which gives the best pictures. Almost a 6 metre by 6 metre object on the ground can be identified by satellite picture. These inputs from remote sensing are in addition to the conventional survey methods which we adopt for the survey of India. A major ambitious management system ie National Natural Resources Management System was set up by the Planning Commission, way back in 1983, and in each resource theme like agriculture, bio resources , rural development, we have a standing committee which is headed by the concerned secretary. Mr. Dasgupta is the Chairman for the standing committee on rural development, for instance. These are exclusive standing committees, and these committees take care of how the remote sensing technology will be utilised for the particular sector in developmental activities. We have set up 5 regional remote sensing servicing centres. One in Bangalore, one in Jodhpur, Kharagpur, Dehradun and Nagpur - five regions. And in addition, we set up 24 state remote sensing application centres - almost all parts of our country are covered and this is a broad network of the National Natural Resources Management System.

What we normally carry out is the resource survey of the country. In fact in 1986 during the drought period, we carried out a massive project for National Drinking Water mission, using satellite data. The ground surveys of about 1.6 lakh villages which were not having consistent source of good water were provided water with this technology along with the Central Ground Water Board, and Public Health Department - we all worked together. Now again one more mission is launched - the Rajiv Gandhi Natural Drinking Water Mission. It is now currently being carried out in five states only ie, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan wherein the problematic villages will be covered using remote sensing technology.

In addition to this, crop acreage and production estimation (what is the crop area in the country and what would be the production) studies are being carried out regularly. The soil erosion study, the soil mapping, urbanisation, how Bangalore has grown from 1900 - 1990. We did a study about these issues and similar studies were carried on for Delhi, Bombay and other areas. Forest mapping is one more area where we have done wonderful work. When we first studied the forest scope in India in 1980s, as per the claims there was 35% forest cover, but our study showed that it was only 21% forest cover, out of which the dense forest is only 11%. Later the forest surveyor of India sat with us, we discussed and the technology has now been transferred to them and they regularly carry out biannual forest cover mapping. The latest report is out - it said that we have lost around 5000 sq. km of area further. So these are some areas of interest though I would like to further focus on the rural development sector since that is the emphasis of this meeting.

In 1990s we launched a mission called the Integrated Mission for Sustainable Development, in short IMSD. This mission, we envisaged is for the development of rural areas. As we are all aware, we don't have a proper spatial information or a map form of resource information in our country. So 175 districts of the country have been taken up by the request of the Planning Commission wherein we are preparing district level maps on ground water, forestry, land use land cover, soil, slope. All these information is collected from satellite data and from conventional information or from topographical maps, in order to locale specific developmental plans for land and water resources.

This study has been completed almost now. Take for example, the watershed approach. As we are all aware, it is a single hydrological entity that we can manage better. Such a watershed approach has been adopted in districts and so far we have covered 84 million hectares of land. Action plans for land and water have been given to the concerned authorities and I am glad to inform you that about 30 districts including our Nilgiris has been implemented by the

district authorities in various ways by constructing dams, nala bunds and alternate land use practices. These are our main activities under our rural programme. And in addition to this with the launch of IRS - 1C and 1D in 1995 and 1997, new vistas have been opened. The earlier Secretary, Sanjeev Reddy was pleased with the rural roads mapping, and rural roads connectivity assessment. As you are all aware that many parts of our country does not have proper roads, good roads or connectivity, so we demonstrated the capability of this technology for assessing the condition of rural roads and connectivity. And rural area mappings also are very detailed, at 1:5000 scale or 1:10000 scale. The current capability of our satellite technology is that we can map the area at 1:12500 scale, but we are planning to launch on satellite called Cartosat which will have a resolution of 2.5 metre by 2.5 metre which will enable us to map upto 1:5000 scale. Currently what we are doing is we map at 1:12500 scale which will be enlarged to pedestal level when pedestal level plans are being carried out. These are the few activities under the standing committee on rural development as well as our own resource groups. We made a beginning in education, we found that upon assessing the need of the trained manpower, we do not having adequate people for doing the work of this magnitude, so we have our own institute called Indian Institute of Remote Sensing in Dehradun and we have the National Remote Sensing Agency also. While there is training given at this level, it continued to be inadequate so we thought it was better to introduce remote sensing in the education field itself. So way back, I as a student also learnt a little remote sensing because I am basically a geologist. Geologists were the first ones to use this technology. But we made an effort to explain our needs to the UGC and we brought out a document on curriculum development in remote sensing way back in 1990 with UGC and DOS together. And this document was circulated to all the Vice Chancellors and other people. I am glad to inform you that now about 12 Universities offer M.Tech. degrees or M.Sc. degree in remote sensing along with a doctoral degree, and in addition 80 Universities have introduced remote sensing as either part of the paper or a full paper or a course with subjects in geology, geography, agriculture, forestry etc. These days we are able to get some manpower readily available to carry out the work. For remote sensing in an advanced area, satellite data exists but in order to gather information from it, so we need some basic training as well as basic understanding of that. That is one thing. We thought we should not stop at this, but we went further and interacted more frequently with NCERT. I am glad to inform you that NCERT adopted our suggestion and they introduced in the geography and physics books some part of the remote sensing curriculum. In fact in Kerala the subject is very well discussed. Without our suggestion, in 1986 itself, they introduced remote sensing and satellite technology even in the geography books of 8th standard itself. So this way we are making a lot of efforts to further introduce this technology at the institute level so that

we will have and adequate manpower, adequate trained people to carry on this massive task because ours is a diverse country. We have deserts in Rajasthan, we have snow covered areas in Himalayas, we have ever green forests in Kerala, such diverse natural resources are available. We have mineral resources, but unfortunately we do not have a proper managerial plan. So NNRM is aiming toward that. While there is remote sensing resource technology along with the conventional surveys, in order to do that we need adequate manpower so we are encouraging the education field to cope with the required demand and do this work for us.

In addition I would like to add one more point for the rural institutes, for the current meeting. As Mr. Jain in the morning said that rural people can be involved in this work, already in our programmes many universities are participating in this work as principle investigators. We fund them and we have special schemes by ISRO itself called 'Respond' wherein such university research is encouraged. In addition to that, we take local university or local education institutions as a party to our work so that they will also benefit from us and we will also benefit from their knowledge. These things can be further extended to rural institutes also; for rural development as well as environmental sector remote sensing is one of the powerful tools for collecting information at short notice and more precisely and more accurately. That is one part of our remote sensing activity.

Another thing I would like to talk about is about the communication facility. Because our INSAT satellite is well linked and connected, rural institutes also can think of being connected through this. 38 institutes exist, and we can link them through the INSAT satellite system, so that they have better accessibility and a better interactive system. With this I end my few words. If you have any doubts you are free to approach us and once again I am thankful to Dr. Jain for inviting ISRO to this particular programme.

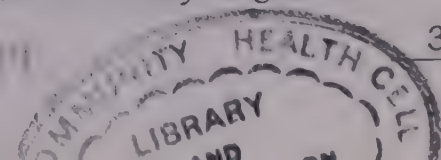
Thank You.

HARISH BHAT
Centre for Ecological Sciences
Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore

I represent Prof. Madhav Gadgil. In 1996, Prof. Madhav Gadgil and a team of 7-8 intellectuals, thought of arranging a people's bio-diversity register programme. It is interesting to know what this people's bio-diversity register

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is and its connection to rural institutes etc. What it actually means is mapping the bio-diversity in a village, in a panchayat or gram panchayat or whatever you take. What exactly is there in that village? What does that village consist of, what are the natural resources? Who are the knowledgeable people available (user groups)? So what people's bio-diversity register is documenting is such kinds of natural resources and such kinds of knowledgeable individual and their knowledge. In what form? Earlier when we had framed this we had our initial set up experiment for around 10 villages where we had think, rethink what exactly has to be done, how exactly we have to plan, how exactly we have to make a methodology manual to work on. Later on in 1996, with the collaboration of WWF India, we had set up this people's bio-diversity register to be started in 7 states, and per state we selected 10 villages. In all these 7 states, either NGOs or education institutions right from college to high school, were involved. Initially they also had some problems in understanding the concept and how exactly to go about the documentation etc, then once we had two - three orientation programme involving all these people, they came to the conclusion that unless we go to the village and work ourselves, we cannot arrive at a proper kind of input. So initially what we were stating in our plan is that students and teachers maybe from high school or colleges, even NGOs for that matter, would go to a village where one of them is from that village in their group so that it will be easy to build a rapport and the villagers could support whatever research is going on. We had to conduct a gram sabha and then propose what is their objective. What is this PBR register like, why DO they want to do it in that village, what is the use, and what it ultimately leads to.

Initially, I will explain what exactly it involves. It involves as a first step, mapping - mapping of that particular village - maybe not like ISRO people, it may not be so technical, but initially an outline map will be drawn involving all the villagers. Interestingly, we spot some main points in that map like temple or school or hospital. Then we ask the people to participate and mark various places which are the forested area, which are the paddy fields, which are the places where the river flowed etc. Interestingly it was noted that by the end of the day, the map which was being created was far far different from the map which was already there in the gram sabha or that mandal panchayat. Perhaps that map would have been done in 1970 or 1976 or so and in that whatever had being pointed out, does not exist at all in this map. It might have been eroded or used like many forest areas which now have turned to either human habitation or to some plantation or orchard. In that way some rivers had vanished in fact, when comparing 1970 and the present.

So villagers were very happy to come forward when they found that such a beautiful map was being created. They felt that not only did we not know what

all our natural resources are, though we knew it in fragments, so that if you are going to compile the information and do such a report, we are very happy. They used to show their happiness. So research institutions along with teachers and students would go to the village every Sunday or Saturday and help in documentation like finding out the kinds of plants, fishes, animals - Not only that, what are the different kinds of right from a fishing community if a particular person is good in fishing, in a particular style to the extent of an agriculturist who is maintaining plenty of traditional crops. Students earlier would think that it was not possible for them to work, but when they also took part, they were very happy to work on such kind of aspects. They in fact came forward for documentation and every week they would come to the village and have an interaction with the villagers. In this, there was a motivation for them to move forward and this kind of activity is not a one time activity, it is on going. Similarly in Karnataka state we had it in 9 villages. In these 9 villages also, interesting features were there. In a nearby place called Ranebennur a high school teacher, took part with his students and although that high school was in a remote village, without many facilities, even he could bring out such a of PBR report that involved not only the documentation but also the management option of the village. So interestingly, after the report was submitted to Gram Sabha, then later on for the Panchayat president, who was there on the last day of the handing over of the report, was requested to come forward to bring these villagers together and form a committee to manage the resource. In a place called Subramanya, there is this NTFP activity going on - heavy non timber forest produce would be collected in that village and there are tribals called Malekodiya who collect these. They would give this to the local collector who is a contractor and he would sell it for 20 - 30 % more than the price. And these villagers were satisfied with whatever they got. Once this documentation was done and we informed the tribals what was actually going on, they came forward to set up their own system, where one of the tribals was the contractor; the earlier contractor was thrown out the village and the tribals would work on their own, and whatever loss occurred, they incurred it. This is one kind of management option being done in practically a village.

What I am here to say is how it can be adopted in a rural institution. Mr. Srinivasamurthy is also aware of this PBR. We have been trying for a long time to implement such kinds of studies in any schools and colleges, these can be easily adopted in fact as a subject. So the government was saying that it will see but till now it has not materialised. Recently the Hon. Education Minister, Govinda Gowda had come for a PBR release function, and he took the initiative of sending the letters to Ministry of Panchayat Raj and to other education secretaries to carry on such kind of exercises, which is very relevant to almost all schools and colleges including rural or urban, wherever it is possible. This

step has already been carried out.

Another thing which I would like to speak of is that Prof. Madhav Gadgil and a set of people have come out with this high school project - how best in high schools mini projects could be initiated. I have one copy of that report. In this what has been done is that a small kind of inventory project is given to high school students where they have to go and monitor some five to six species which is indicated there as an example. They need to monitor each species - how it is growing there and what are its ecological status etc. - some weeds are also given, some birds are also given. How best the students of high school can do such kind of studies - proposals on this have been submitted to DSERT also recently and they also took some initiative steps. This is on the move actually. So such kinds of activities are going on in our institution.

JYOTINDRA JAIN

National Crafts Museum, Delhi

I think that from the writings of Mahatma Gandhi we are familiar with the emphasis on working with hands and doing physical work and making things and its impact on the body mind mechanism and development. So I think I will not go into that in detail because he has done several notes and essays which are published and I believe the importance of that is known. I work for the Crafts Museum which is in Delhi; I have been in this field for the last 20 years, and we have been doing a lot of work with children. Annually about 75000 children come to the crafts museum and we do various kinds of workshops with children and craftsmen because we have a major programme of crafts demonstration in which throughout the year, every month we invite 50 crafts people to come and stay with us from all over India. So they come on the first of the month and on the 30th they go back, and we have a great resource available with us in Delhi in Pragati Maidan. We have a 10 acres complex where we have enough space for this kind of interaction and our experiences are quite varied and very interesting. We have observed children's involvement in crafts and what kind of responses they produce and what kind of learning results.

I have also been a student of policy on handicrafts and I am quite upset when I look at the first 5 year plan report and the second 5 year plan report and how we have fragmented our artistic and crafts traditions right from the beginning. These definitions come straight away out of the British definitions. It seems that we attained independence abruptly in spite of the great struggle and that we did not have the time to think differently from what the British were thinking in terms of categorisation and definitions of things. So it was

during the British period that this great divide was built between art and craft. This divide did not exist in India traditionally. If you look at Sanskrit literature, the word which was used for things that were made was called Shilpa and Shilpani was plural - it would include music, architecture, painting, sculpture, cooking - various things would be shilpa. So there was no critical need for us to say this is art, and this is craft, and art is higher and that craft is something pedestrian. This need did not exist in our culture. There is not a cultural context in India in which we can find, right from ancient time, all throughout the literature of the north and the south, in which art is described to be higher and crafts to be lower and that art and craft were segregated or fragmented.

If you look at the first and second five year plan reports, you will find that the government had thought of creating an All India Handicrafts Board and Handlooms Board separately and National Gallery of Modern Art and National Museum separately and this has grown out of British ideas. I am not interested in some kind of redefining things for the sake of it. It is not purely academic but what we did was that we caused a great harm by placing art on a high pedestal, and craft, which is the expression of millions of people in the country, was placed on the pedestrian level. That can be sold in shops like the cottage industry emporium; anything good, bad or indifferent can be sold over there whereas art would have positions in museums and galleries. Some thing churned out a hundred times by some body like M.F. Hussain would sell for 5 lakhs rupees or more whereas a work that is done by a so called crafts man who always sell on the footpath or somewhere in a shop, will be sold at paltry price. It is not just the question of getting the price. I think if we determine our priority in terms of definitions that are imposed upon us, and then we deal with the expression of thousands of people who are working in villages and deal with that, it is unimportant. It is a matter of children learning something useful in the school, then I think all along that in planning budgets, in terms of everything we do, we have gone wrong. So my feeling is that this needs to be corrected and we need to go back to understand art - craft as a continuum as we have to understand this urban-rural continuum.

Today there are no area which are distinctly rural and distinctly urban, yes they are in a way, but within an urban centre, there is an extraordinarily high rural population that lives - so we cannot go by only geographical kind of divisions but we must understand urban and rural in that kind of continuum which is very important.

Today in the census that is prepared by the government of India, there are about 20 million crafts people who are self employed - that is craftsman and weavers of about 20 million people. And if you count those who depend on these there are 25 million people. It would make a nation in Europe. Now that many

resources - living resources in this country, and that mud skill - that is the skill of all our universities and vidyapeets and everything put together - that is a skill that we cannot create over at least 500 years if you were to create institutions that were to impart this skill to people. So if you create a National Institute of Design and people who come from elite schools and go to National Institute of Design, and stay there for 5 years doing the pottery class, they cannot take a wheel, which is hand operated and produce a pot, even a simple pot looking into your eyes and not looking at the pot, which a 12 or 13 year old son of a potter can do. That is one example.

This is the same for the weaver also. You take a loom and go to anywhere in Benaras or Andhra where there are weaving areas. Just go and see these 13-14 years old boys and girls, they are able to operate and produce and they talk to you, they laugh, they joke with you while producing the thing. They are not even having a kind of serious concentration because it is within them. And I think this internalisation and having something within was the point that Mahatma Gandhi was making. He was not talking about some kind of adoption, he was talking about certain skills from which we can make certain living. All these we have forgotten because we have classified things and values are completely misplaced. Somebody who can produce things like that is nothing when compared to M.F. Hussain doing this and that with the whole media backing. This whole system needs to be re-understood or re-calculated to be able to give proper importance to doing things by hand and bringing it to education.

It is ironical that if I have to go to an average village school, I will find that the teachers and the students are not very concerned with the importance of crafts, but if I go to the most elite school of Delhi, I find that importance of crafts are being taught in the school and the children are picking up. So let us not go by this elite and non elite. The question is what is correct and ironically the rural has been today understood from outside, in an elite school properly. So what happens to the village school where there are more direct connections possible and why are we not able to utilize the regional things that are available? Look at the massive misunderstanding that we have. I remember when Chandrashekar was Prime Minister, he wanted to develop his constituency Ballia, and his secretary called me and said we are all going to Ballia because we wanted to find out what can be done in Ballia and then I was asked to find some crafts programmes and crafts that are existing so that money can be put into Ballia. When we were going there, Chandrashekarji told me so you are going to check on the crafts, but let me tell you I grew up in that area but there are no crafts there. I said Sir, I have never been in Ballia but I can only tell you that there is no region of India where there are no crafts, it is

not possible. If you are thinking of crafts meaning gold and silver, they may not be there but there is no Indian region where there is no pottery or basketry. And then I went there in the morning and came back in the afternoon with 40-50 photographs showing what kinds of crafts existed in Ballia.

All the teachers from India, they call craftsmen to Delhi - it is an amazing thing for me because teachers from rural areas come to Delhi and craftsmen from rural areas come to Delhi and those crafts men who come with half equipment try to tell teachers what is to be done and the teachers can't find the craftsmen in the villages where they are working themselves. We have forgotten common sense. It is all modern education through which I have also come, that has taught us not to go by common sense. Common sense is something suspect; we are supposed to go by the word which is written. Surprisingly now in anthropology, there is a whole branch called the anthropology of common sense - that is the knowledge of the people themselves and things like that. I think the anthropology of common sense would be able to make a good input in our thinking and planning.

I was in Delhi, and I hope you might have heard that there is this National Institute of Fashion Technology and now all over India they have opened branches. Last week, for four days I was interviewing students who wanted admission in the institute and this was for post graduate level. Now they were already graduates and anyone who comes and sits, we say you want admission in what? They say textile design. So what do you understand under 'textile'. What are the raw materials for Indian textile? Invariably the answer was nylon or chemicals. Among 20 people interviewed, perhaps 5 or 6 came from elite schools in Delhi and the rest from Bihar, UP, and they all told me this - no body mentioned cotton, wool, silk etc. It is amazing that they are graduates, they want to come and do textile technology and textile design and they don't mention cotton as a raw material. Then I asked how textile is made: The most intelligent ones said, it is made of a two thread system, so I asked, what is a thread system - they did not know. I said have you heard of Waft and Weave - they said no. This is truly recorded in our report that graduates want admission in textile without knowing anything about it.

I find in a context like this that the tradition modernity discourse is becoming very important. Whenever I have read Gandhiji's writing, I feel he was not pre-eminently concerned with the tradition modernity thing. He was not thinking as we are often doing that tradition is something that was - that was in the past, that was glorious, that was wonderful, and modern is something now, which will be in future and that is something to be despised. I think that we should forget about glorifying tradition because all what we are doing is tradition - today sitting here and talking in English is part of our tradition. All the cinema

hoardings which are very prominent in southern India and things and TV are all part of our tradition - Where has it come from? It has grown out of our tradition. Once you forget the tradition-modernity dichotomy, I think we are going to solve many problems, because how can we say that certain art in bronze made in the Chola period in southern India was very beautiful? How can we say that this was our tradition but all the cinema posters and photography that is done is not our tradition? I think that if Chola rulers had photography and plastic available, they would have chosen it immediately considering it a kind of new material. Chola bronze materials were new once upon a time. The Taj Mahal - was a fancy monument, and it looks like something plastic. Why not? Marble work was not traditional Indian material for the construction of monuments - it came very late in the 11 century. So I think in all these traditional modernity things that we construct, we should not despise modernity - tradition is something that continues. We cannot say that tradition ended in 1947. Or we cannot say tradition ended by the coming of the Mughals. There is no point where we can say tradition has ended - particularly Indian tradition. So let us not construct false notions about building a tradition and apply it to Indian art.

Another is the emphasis on economic development vis-à-vis self sufficiency. If you go to north Eastern India - Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram - all these places, if you look at people, they are the best people in the country, I feel. Every single household has a loom and they weave with that because they use a particular loom with a certain width. They are the only people who are best dressed in the country because every single house has a loom and things are done. That is self sufficiency in clothing that does not figure in our books of progress. But if you go to Andhra, they are making Pochampalli and in these areas they are making amounts of furnishing and things. Look at the condition of the weavers themselves, the way they are dressed. Because in the account books in exports and marketing their figure is bigger and appear importantly, we think Andhra is very important and the North East does not deserve any kind of help in clothing. So self sufficiency which Mahatma Gandhiji thought was an important principle, I believe should be the basis of any economic growth; if you are self sufficient, why do you need money transactions? Basically it is important that you are self sufficient. But it is when money transactions appear that it becomes very important in our planning and value systems whereas in the north east nobody talks about it and they don't complain that they want more money for their well being. This I think is an important example that I would like to bring in. I also think that there is this question of child labour which is being made terribly important in India by people who are receiving awards abroad for say, talking in favour of Indian children. I think we are mixing up issues of child labour and children learning in their own home situation. I think we should not insist that the child acquires formal education before craftsma

Swami Agnivesh would be very upset about what I am saying - according to him unless the child is 14 years old and the child has acquired formal education - the child should not start learning. I can assure you that in my 20 years of experience in this field, it is simply not possible that you start your learning in pottery and weaving etc. when you are 14 years old. Then you will have to go to National Institute of Design; if that is the agreeable thing it doesn't mater. It produces every year 70-80 graduates. So if you are going to produce 25 million people out of that , we need 500 years and millions of dollars to be able to do that - and the skilled labour won't be the same. So I feel the question of child labour is being over emphasised in an incorrect manner. I think we should give attention to that because we cannot bring crafts into education if we are not going to do this.

I would like to mention one more point that in India there is nothing like intellectual property rights for non elite people. And it is such an issue; I was in Australia some days ago and I tell you that for their aboriginals, whatever atrocities historically they might have done, but today at least they have such an intellectual property right law that they have evolved in their country is amazing that in our country, if you publish again a Hussain painting somewhere in the newspaper, or even if he has sold the painting to somebody - whereas we buy all the painting.

Two months ago I got a phone call from Paris and somebody said that they owned a major departmental store and he wanted to reproduce a Madhubani painting which he had bought from a crafts museum for Rs.15/-. He wanted to reproduce that on shawls and beach towels and he said he had bought it for Rs.15/- but he is going to do this range and he wanted to pay the craftsman. I said if you had bought that then it is your right to do whatever you want. But he said not in his country. So I said ok., fax it to me and I will try and find out the owner of it. And he faxed it to me. I found out who was the crafts person and within fifteen days they gave this village women - very unfortunate woman who is living in Madhubani, Rs.4 lakhs and said as we sell the towels etc. we will give you more royalty. And it opened my mind - that a postcard that was bought from our country we do not do this. Constantly we are using designs in different sectors doing this kind of things and I think this is another area which I think would get somehow tied up in our programme.

L.C. JAIN

I would suggest the adoption of some schools by the village panchayats where this crafts education is given. This can be actually worked out. National Design Institute, my dear Ramlalji Parekh, is where in these five years they go to the craftsmen, they copy their designs, they make an album, they get a Ph.D. then they join Tatas and do advertisements. I have been associated with the National Design Institute. After all the craftsmen's design has no copyright. But they don't even give the courtesy of the name of the designer. They put their own names. So National Design Institute is playing a role. Let it do it. It's not in our books.

HARTMAN DE SOUZA

I am actually very happy that a large portion of this discussion is being directed towards education. When the new century dawns in this country, I think there is going to be a class of people largely from our main metros who can merge and compete with the best in the world. At the same time, India is going to march into the new century with the world's largest out of school population. It's a fact.

It's a little depressing if we talk about education because when you read the UNDP Report for instance, in 1994, when India bought MIG 29 fighter jets, this was bought at a cost that could have educated all the 15 million girl children currently out of school. Not to say that the education system that is available for those who can afford it, is very good. In fact I strongly suspect that if Gandhiji had to come back, and look at our schooling and educational system in metros (let's not talk about the under privileged areas), I suspect he would strongly say that the school should be closed for the children and reopened for parents, teachers and politicians.

I work for the India Foundation for the Arts, which is a grant making agency. We support projects in arts. We interpret the arts widely - the written, the performed, the broadcasted, both the traditional as well as the modern. We offer support in three programme areas. Arts research and documentation, arts collaboration and arts education. The first two programmes are announced publicly. We disseminate the document announcing the programme to about 10,000 addressees throughout the country - institutions as well as individuals - and ask them to disseminate it further. Proposals come in. They are internally evaluated and short listed and then sent to outside evaluators. In our heart of hearts, there is no rural-urban divide. For instance, at least ten of the 40 or 50 odd grant that we have made actually support crafts projects in villages. Research that will eventually benefit the crafts people in rural areas. A grantee of ours is a musicologist, who is studying the musical instruments of the adivasis

of Jungle Mahan in Badhwan. She has suddenly become very conscious of the development issues that are linked with the adivasis, not just reviving for them their musical literacy and education but also in what way they can be brought into developmental initiatives. We have supported a project in the Nilgiris, i.e., working with the Kota tribals. The Kota women make traditional ritual pottery. So some effort is being made by the researchers there - not only in the making of the pots and the aesthetics of the pots, but in what way this study can have an impact on the lives of people who actually make up the life style and the craft.

I would like to dwell on Shri Rajiv Vora's paper, which I read very carefully. It's a paper I am largely in agreement with and I think everybody here would be too. If there is a vacuum that I find in the paper, it is a gap and vacuum in fact that exists in most agencies working in development and perhaps going all the way up to the development agencies that fund NGOs. I am talking about arts and culture. I must stress that when I say arts and culture, we do not exclude the crafts of indigenous arts. I don't think NGOs, whether they are working on the environment or whether they are working in social justice, have given enough thought to the role that arts and culture can play.

In fact if I may be bold enough to say this, I think this is an aspect Gandhiji himself has not covered in detail. You can understand this for in a sense when he was writing, the imperatives and the pressures were of a different nature. But I think today, so many years down the line, I think some thought has to be given as to what role the arts and culture play in development. There is one school of thought which says that all you need to do is to go into a village and put 225 hand pumps. There is another school of thought which says that if you don't train people to maintain the hand pumps, enlarge the culture of their village, the hand pumps as a matter of fact may not work. I think NGOs particularly, since there has been some talk of opening negotiations with NGOs, I think NGOs have to realise arts and culture can play a crucial part particularly in education for instance Ms. Narayanan was talking about general issues in a village. I think girl children are particularly at threat. One can ask in what way are the arts going to help? And I can tell you for sure, if you take just one of the arts - the one that I know best, let us take the theatre, nobody takes theaters seriously in schools. But yet, you can use theatre to teach four languages starting with kids who are 5½ years old. I know this because I have taught theatre in school and I have seen the benefits. I, for instance, am a Goan, my wife is Maharashtrian which makes our children Indian, and my daughter and son goes to a school on the outskirts of Bangalore. Now most people who come from my class, our class, would insist that their children go to an English medium school. Where my children learn - they read and write English, they

also read and write Hindi and also Kannada. My daughter is going to be in the 8th. In fact she has a better hand writing in Kannada than she has in English. The reason I mentioned this is that this language is a reason of stress and she learns this language so comfortably because she learnt these languages through theatre and arts.

We mentioned that self esteem is a problem for the rural children specially girls. I can see the arts actually helping to enhance this esteem and prestige. All I can say at the end of the day, is that if some thought in future planning should be given in what role the arts and the culture can play, all development agencies will tell you that the major problem in rural areas is the high drop out rate. This could be due to compulsions at home. But I suspect that the drop out rate is also because the schools are also largely very boring, they are bad. I can say now in my ripe old age, that I was very happy when I left school. School was terrible, and I sympathise completely with kids who have to go to school. Mr. Murthy today mentioned text book learning. But imagine sitting in a school where there is only one teacher in front, who is talking his or her head off and no body is listening because it is also very boring. We can enliven the teaching environment using the arts. There is proof all over the world that art and education together work well; it has been documented and practised widely abroad. In fact if you read material on how the arts have been used to improve education abroad, if you are a true Indian, you will hang your head in shame. So I trust and hope fervently that some thought will be given to art and culture in education.

Thank you.

Dr. N. MARKANDAN

Vice Chancellor of Gandhigram Rural Institute :

We are extremely grateful to Mr. L.C. Jain for convening this meeting. I was thinking that the National Council for Rural Institute is almost dead. Then as soon as I received the communication I was very happy. The agenda for the consultation that is given here is almost exhaustive. Gandhigram Rural Institute though it has attained the University status, did not shed many of the important aspects of the rural institute programme, as was visualised when it was started in 1966 on the basis of the recommendations of the Dr. Radhakrishnan Committee. I myself am a rural institute graduate. I proudly can say that I am a product of the rural institute programme. So I am happy that I am heading the Gandhigram Rural Institute now. So what I have done in two years after I assumed charge, to try to reform the present system of deemed universities programme to some extent. In the first step, I started including this field work

programme into the credit system. Unless the student gets 12 credits, he cannot get the degree from this rural institute. And Mrs. Desai, our former UGC Chairman, when she visited, very much appreciated this and said that it is a revolutionary idea. So we have done this.

As of now, some of the things which are given here in the agenda we have already started doing it at the micro level or the panchayat level. I suggested that each department must adopt one panchayat and the scholars and the Ph.D scholars must meet the panchayat members once a month. This is how I suggested it, but three department has taken the lead - The Dept. of Political Science, Dept. of Public Administration and Rural Development and Extension. They have all started. It will be an experience to the scholars also meeting them - we call it panchayat planning meeting - since the experts are also invited. We meet now once in two months. I don't say it is very easy to convene this meeting because the state government has not fully understood this exercise. But slowly we are persuading them to meet and plan at the panchayat level.

Another thing we have started is to help the primary school. We have selected 10 primary schools in 10 panchayats and the department of Adult education along with the students who volunteer, take them once in a week, between 3 and 4. They are given some kind of value oriented programme which is framed in an informal way - now it is in an experimental basis. We teach them some songs and stories, exercises and meditation, the biography of Mahatma Gandhi etc.

Another thing, from the Centre some directions are given to the State institutions like Gandhigram and Gandhian institutions — to arrange the training programme for the primary school teachers. We have started a few years ago. I started a series of orientation programme at my own personal level. That can be revived. For all these things the UGC cannot help because it has its own limitations. We need some assistance in this. Another important thing is that we are giving training to the panchayat in the micro level planning. Recently, we had some funds and I requested the President to take 10 GP Presidents to Kerala. The Presidents attended 2 gramsabha meetings at Kerala and they observed everything. Kerala is setting an example in political power. So our panchayat president gave us feed back. We listened to them, I invited all the press people. They listened to the Gram Panchayat President. A good coverage was given to the Presidents' report.

This kind of giving education and training to the panchayat Presidents is also going on in the institute. Another important thing after I have assumed charge is that we have started publishing a research journal. Whatever we do, sometimes the other universities look down upon us. I asked our Extension

Director and the Professor of Rural Development Dr. Palanithurai, to write their experiences of their field work in the form of a research article. So now they have started writing and the third issue is going to be published now. That also we have been doing, even though it is very difficult to find funds for that. I think that what we have been doing is definitely different from the other institutes. We have been doing the same thing also, but we have been doing something more in our own line of thinking. I think NCRI will definitely help to experiment and spread these things in Tamil Nadu through our Institute very well.

I would like to suggest one or two things. Regarding our Gandhian institution, some of them are doing good work. At the same time, some more of them can do good work, but we have to identify them. A small committee can go round and identify such genuine institutions and we can help them, so that in our own way we can revive the Nai Talim. That would be good. For instance in Veerapandi Khadi Vidyalaya, after my retirement in 1996, I was there for 11 months. Shri V. Ramachandranji requested me to revamp the courses of the industrial institute. During that time, I started a Gandhi School. Now it is running in Tamil Medium.

I have been thinking of how to introduce this new education system because they have constructed a number of buildings in the Veerapandi campus, but now they don't know how to use those vacant buildings. I suggested to them that they could use it as some kind of an industrial centre. Such institutions could be identified and these new ideas could be introduced there.

In Gandhigram, what we have been doing is, during the period of Devendra Kumarji, we started a Rural Technology Centre. After I assumed charges, we have started some programmes in that Centre. We have started to give training in masonry and fruit processing. It is going on well. 60 of our own students have enrolled here to undergo this training. We have also started recently the Entrepreneurship Development Centre. One senior reader has been made the Honorary Director and to assist him there is another faculty member. They are generating their own funds. Apart from that, we have started giving short term training in fruit processing, tailoring, candle making, embroidery and toys making. From other colleges also students come for this training and they stay here for 21 days. We charge a fairly low fee. Our own students are undergoing this training during their summer holidays. Of course a minimum fee is collected from them also. Our teachers are also doing these things. After the revised pay scales of UGC and all that, I don't say that all of them are in tune with these objectives, but I have made them understand the objectives. I think NCRI and we can all think over all these things. Whoever is doing these kinds of things, we have to join together and convene a meeting and we can share our ideas

and experiences and we have to visit one another's centres also. I think whatever I have explained orally and through some reports, if you visit, you can understand well what is going on in Gandhigram. Our Gandhigram campus consists of three legal entities (1) Gandhigram Trust, (2) Institute of Rural Health and Family Welfare Trust and (3) the Deemed University. We are helping one another through the various committees of these institutions. Gandhi gram Trust is supplying Ayurvedic and Siddha medicines all over the country. The Gandhigram institute is thus partly in tune with the National Council of Rural Institutes.

Thank you.

JAGANNATH GHOSH

**Secretary, Centre for Rural Education Extension
Vishvabharati**

Tagore started this rural experiment in Sriniketan in 1922. At Sriniketan there has developed a multi disciplinary set of faculties like the college of agriculture, cottage industries training and rehabilitation centre. Instead of getting any opposition from university or university structure, our Centre is fortunate enough that it has been utilising the multi disciplinary faculty support. We are not facing any trouble from the university structure, but in fact rather we are getting all sorts of support. So as Gandhiji envisaged 'education for development', Tagore also envisaged that there should be a system of education to bring back life in its completeness. This is by making the villagers self respectful and self reliant, by imparting the knowledge and skill among the rural people, to update their indigenous knowledge and skill, with the introduction of modern technology.

With these objectives and ideas, under the leadership of our dynamic Vice Chancellor Professor D.K. Sinha, we started this Centre. Our major thrust areas are to sensitise and orient and reorient the village people irrespective of age group, right from the age group of 9-14, 15-34 and 35 and above. Regarding the socio economic and environmental condition in which they live in, as a part of this programme, we have selected 33 villages including 18 tribal hamlets with a population composition of about 63,000 and the tribal population is 7 % of that total composition. For Ninth Plan period we have taken up this area. That is the total population. 63,000 in 33 villages including 18 tribal hamlets. We used to take it as our laboratory to learn something, which has recently involved participatory rural appraisal. Learning in both ways. We want to learn something from the villagers and we want to put some educational inputs into the villages for their own development.

We started this programme in June 1997 after the grant was released by NCRI in April 1997. The major areas were training, workshop, material development and action research activities. So far we have been able to develop certain training packages on low cost eco friendly rural housing out of the available local resources. We have trained about 60 masons regarding low cost technology and 40 small entrepreneurs who are supposed to develop and produce low cost building material like pressed blocks, roof tiles and other door and window channels. This project was supported by HUDCO India. Apart from that, we have developed a package on rural resource mapping and micro level planning. Again, we are fortunate enough that the district authorities have a good relationship with us. In response to our programme, district authorities requested us to train some people for their district block level, and accordingly we have trained 76 block level people including government officials and panchayat functionaries regarding resource mapping and micro level planning. They have started this programme in all the 169 Gram Panchayats and 5 municipalities and all 2323 villages. I personally attended some of the meetings where they presented this map and plan for their consideration. Primarily the Pradhans did not want to accept these things the people resisted. They said, No, this is our village, development is ours and we want to suggest something for our own developmental planning. This is our suggestion. Now we have to know that this is our resources, so much of land, so many water resources, so we want to make our plans. I am fortunate enough to report it here that this is the result of the empowerment which Gandhi emphasised.

Another package of training material we have developed. That is women empowerment and legal rights. So far we have trained 75 or 80 newly elected women members of the panchayats. That is also in collaboration with the district authorities. These women leaders are acting as opinion leaders and we are monitoring their programmes. Another Institute, called Centre for Science in Villages, gives science education right from school children to housewives. Those who are using science without knowing that this is science. For example, a housewife is cooking something. She is using science, but without knowing that there is science. She is consuming energy, she is preparing food sometimes with nutritious value and sometimes not. We wanted to introduce certain educational components with their traditional habits, so that they can use it better in the way of their life. This Centre is looked after by Professor Basu Mallick, who is a Professor of Chemistry in our faculty.

I would now request Prof. Basu Mallick to supplement this information, and I would end with a request to the Chairman, NCRI and the Secretary for Rural Development who is present here, that we will submit our action plan within June and please look into that, so that can be supported by NCRI or from the

Dept. of Rural Development. I have forgotten to say one thing. From the Dept. of Science and Technology, they have provided funds for a project on the use of agro technology for rural development. So we expect some support from the Dept. of Rural Development and Employment Assurance, which is headed by Mr. Dasgupta. So sir, with these words, I thank all the august members of the society, and pioneers of rural development, who are present here. My Vice Chancellor was supposed to attend this meeting, but unfortunately for him he has been engaged in some other job and fortunately for me, I have been favoured with the opportunity to interact with so many learned educationists and experts. From this meeting, my ideas have been enriched and I will try to draw the action plan accordingly and submit it by June this year.

Prof. BASU MALLICK

As introduced by Mr. Ghosh, I am looking after the Centre for Science in Villages. These two Centres were created a couple of years back to modernise our Srinikethan activities. Before saying anything about education, I should say that there are three components of education. One is an administrative component, another is the financial component and the third is the academic component. So NCRI should give its guidelines according to these. These are very much inter-related.

My topic here is not on the administrative aspect. Today I shall confine myself to the academic part of the programme. In the academic part, there is some formal education and non formal education. The CSV staff have three important tasks. One is the fundamental tasks, then some applied tasks and also some research oriented tasks. The fundamental tasks are the promotion of science education basically and then awareness and capacity building and problem identification. These are the basic tasks. Apart from this in the applied sciences, we have some demonstration program at the primary school stage. There is some field study and also a data base creation.

Regarding research, we are submitting different projects to different agencies, regarding this promotion of science education at the school level. As you know, Vishvabharathi is basically the education system based on Tagore's philosophy. I should say what are these philosophies. These are, firstly, creativity. It may be any level - primary level, secondary level or research level. There should be some scope for creativity. The most important thing is the joy of doing things. We should not teach just for duty's sake. If you don't find joy in teaching, then don't do it. So basically what is most important is we should introduce in our curriculum, there should be some kind of joy in the primary level. Without joy there is drop out. Basically the system should be such that they should get

joy in doing things. Finally, everything should be visualised on the global scale. These are the basic philosophies in Srinikethan and Shantinikethan. That is creativity, joy in doing things and the visualisation at the global scale. These are the basic aspects.

Now keeping in mind some of our school curriculum. At the primary level, we have a very interesting programme. That is the nature study. The primary students are introduced to different kind of plants, flowers, insects etc. outside the class room. As Mr. Jain has rightly pointed out, outside the class room, there needs to be some programme. This programme is going on at the primary level. NCRI should introduce this study in the curriculum to all the primary schools. Because the nature study is most important from the environmental point of view also.

Regarding the demonstration, we demonstrate a kind of solar cooker. Though we don't have any model, but the school students are getting very interested and they have this exposure to energy and environment. We are also trying to introduce a low cost solar cooker. We are also trying to introduce some kind of concept on low cost housing to the rural schools, at the primary level. This is another area in which we are interacting. These are some of the activities that we have started at our Centre, but basically we are trying to promote science education at the school level. We do not want to create so many posts of science teachers. At the initial stage, there may be some kind of mobilisation of some expert people to those villages, because the primary schools are run by one or two teachers. We can have a system whereby the mobilisation team can interact with the primary school teachers, who can then introduce this kind of concept. This is my humble submission to you. Thank you all.

L.C. JAIN

CSV can do a document to compose what is being done by way of science education in the schools is not covered by you and what it is that you are doing. Then we can see the difference.

Mr. RAJIV VORA

It was certainly a very meaningful discussion throughout this day. I suppose there are two issues that always get mixed up. One of employment and the other of education. There is a catch in this also. We should be clear whether the basic education people who are in the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi should fall into this catch or not. It was very nicely pointed out by Srinivasamurthy that this problem of self esteem is of the utmost importance. Modern education

is unhinging our young people's minds from their surroundings. There is total alienation. What Mahatma Gandhi says is, that modern education teaches our children that our own culture is unproductive and decadent. Therefore he says again, that 'if I had my way, I would destroy all the existing text books and cause to be written new text books which are based on the surroundings'. Therefore this whole question of reorienting our vision on the surrounding as a basic educational resource is the crux of the problem. I am happy that in many ways this has been highlighted by friends. People have been doing this, probably inspired by the environmental movements rather than educational ideas. There again, I would pose one caution to friends like Madhav Gadgil and his colleagues that this registering and mapping of the various things that belong to our people, can prove a dangerous exercise. I can give you an example of Gujarat. When these registers have been made, those people have been eliminated. This is a very anthropological attitude. This is my gut feeling. I will tell you an example.

In Gujarat we were looking for the actual status of Maldharis, the cow breeders. Their situation had gone terribly bad and nobody was worrying about that. My hunch was that they constitute about 30 % of the total population of Saurashtrian castes. We enquired at the office of the government department of rural development. They came out with a figure of 16,000 families in Saurashtr and Kutch. There are only 16,000 families which are registered. Who were these 16,000 families? They were those new cow breeders produced by the Amul Dairy scheme. Those who were given cows and buffaloes, they became the new cow breeders and the traditional cow breeder communities got completely alienated. They were erased from the memory of the ruling system. So therefore we can say now there is so much of effort on the part of modern system, the market, to know the basic resources of India, how people live, what is the way they make their life sustainable, what is the extent of their lifestyle diversity, thought diversity, spiritual diversity, all this. Registering at times violates sanctity.

I have this hunch that this information gathering can lead to something else also. Finally where power lies, that decides what will happen with the information. But as I said, we are rather in this two fold problem. One of the self esteem. Our young people are alienated from the surroundings and it is depicted as a decadent culture. So that becomes an alienated mind. I believe that an alienated mind plus an idle mind becomes violent and destructive - not merely an idle mind. Both these things have come out very obviously in this discussion right from the morning. Gandhi's idea of basic education is, where do we gather our resources from. What would be the basic idea of development. And that is central to basic education. Political, economic, cultural and spiritual

needs must be fulfilled from the vicinity, over which one has a moral supervision. That is the idea of Swaraj. So without hinging this idea of education and development to the vision of Swaraj, we cannot reconcile the dichotomy between the problem of self esteem and the problem of meaningful occupation. So therefore the whole idea of Swaraj, whether the society knows about its own resources, both cultural and spiritual, leads to the idea of the empowerment. If you are not dependant for your economic, political, cultural and spiritual resources, on an outside world which is unknown to you, then you will not get exploited and eliminated. Therefore there should be a growing space for the fulfillment of the four fold needs of the society from the vicinity. Therefore we should know the vicinity. This knowing of geography and whether this geography could be made into an educational resource or not is important because that would create a sense of belongingness to one's own motherland. This is patriotic education. The Modern education is, I generally believe, unpatriotic because it throws the student away from his motherland and he thinks that his motherland is not a provider, only a drag on his development.

Nai Talim should be brought back. I give you one example. You may probably know that the Chairman of the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury are co-chairmen of World Faith Development Dialogue. They are looking for this spiritual resources of development. It has taken 500 years to de-spiritualise ourselves, de-spiritualise the very idea of development, de-spiritualise the relationship with our surroundings. How do we re-spiritualise it - that is the problem. And basic education is the only one method and idea of education which provides us a sound philosophy and method - both of re-spiritualising the whole process of development. Because it creates a sense of belongingness. Spirituality lies in the ability to love what I am related to and make sacrifices for that. Therefore you say, students of basic education school are very different from others. Their idea of life is very different. I don't know whether the saying is true today - but during my student days I have seen that our understanding of our society - not only physical resources but the community, the society, the tradition, the history was very important - they were a source of pride. And there was also a sense of suffering for that. Therefore I would say that the whole idea of basic education has to be put across a wider scale also, rather than working only on the various projects which are directly related with experiments with aspects of basic education. There should also be a larger dialogue on education where the value of basic education should be brought out. Because it is a futuristic education plan. I think that within the next 5 or 10 years, when people all over the world would be searching for something which can provide a very sustainable base for an education or philosophy for education, then they will have to come back to Basic Education. This is a nice forum. This council should take up this task of re-stating the intrinsic value

of Basic Education idea and therefore also study what has gone into the entire experimentation right from the time of Aranayakamji. That would be a good exercise.

Secondly, we need development and environment groups because Basic Education has also a developmental side. It provides a vision for developing your surrounding resources, and a method of mobilising people's belongingness towards their own resources and surrounding including community. Community doesn't mean people who are living at that particular moment of history but community means the entire history of the community. We did experiment in 20 schools in Saurashtra. What is happening in basic education, what they could not do so far is, that the corpus of knowledge that should have come out has not been seriously academically documented. And we don't have a locality based corpus of knowledge, we teach history to a student like the history of India, not the history of his own community, history of his own surrounding, history of his own village and his district and his state. That we don't teach. Even mathematics and geography should come from the surrounding. If I look at my own soil, and test it in the laboratory it will teach science, it will teach biology, it will teach zoology, it will teach sociology and it will also teach history. Therefore this development of the idea of using surrounding as an educational resource needs to be seriously worked out. Because that is a very sound educational idea. Some people who has done this kind of experiment, they are doing an enquiry into the microcosm. This should be the basis for writing new text books for schools. Unless some experiment in writing new text books is done, we would not have something concrete in terms of educational tools to say this is what we mean, this is what Basic Education is.

Somewhere around 1987 we started this in 20 schools and we had tremendous results. The same students who during 1987 used to say that we want to leave the village and this area, it doesn't provide us anything, it is barren; the same students spoke a different language after 3-4 years. It took them some time.

There are two new documents which are very important now. 'Running without frontiers' and the International Education Commission's. 'Four pillars of 20th century education'. They don't refer to Gandhi but almost paraphrase everything of Gandhi. That is what the Chairman was suggesting and I picked it up because we need a style where Gandhi may not be named at all but he is in it. It is in part - learning to learn, learning to do, learning to live together. These are exactly what Gandhi has been always campaigning.

The problem with this book and Gandhi and education is that when we take Gandhiji on a particular subject there is a difficulty in linking up the same idea with the overall idea of human development or cultural development.

Mr. DASGUPTA

I must record my gratitude and thanks for the gracious invitation that you extended to me. So far as the subject matter you were discussing, it is very appropriate that I am speaking the concluding portion because I have very little to contribute to the very wonderful suggestions which came from the galaxy of people and intellectuals who spoke. They were extremely useful suggestions and I am sure my colleague Jawahar Srivastava, who is sort of transmitting it to the education secretary and education department will take note of all the suggestions.

By nature of my function being what an eminent political leader has very colourfully described as a migratory bird, I won't be able to say something very profound, but I will say something from the hindsight of experience one has gathered. What needs to be done to enrich the general stream of school education starting from the primary level in the rural areas in the perspective of Basic Education is my first concern. I would like to say that regarding the rural areas debate, we have to be a little careful because I personally feel that the urban-rural divide in terms of access to information, knowledge or technology will have to disappear. If we don't do this, we create a deliberate dichotomy in the system of education. At present, we know sir, the whole system is tuned to what could be called an 'information regime'. Whereas I think that experience and wisdom, everything tells us that it should be a continuum from information to knowledge to wisdom. But we have stultified at the level of information and therefore whatever we are trying either by dissemination or by way of assessment, is at the level of information. I am suggesting sir, that we need not talk about what needs to be done in the rural areas but we may talk about what needs to be done with the system as such, in which we are not always stuck at the level of information. India has contributed enormously in the past and has been continuing to do so in the current regime also and I am sure it will continue to do so in the future also. The system is still producing people who are knowledgeable and wise but the numbers are few. The average level has stultified at the level of information. The point is how the system could respond to an average level wherein this knowledge and wisdom could come. It need not be at a highly sophisticated level, but it has to come.

If this has to come sir, be it the rural area, be it the urban area, we have to go in, a very big way, for teachers training. There is no escape from that. In the wake of independence when we went largely on equity considerations for a tremendous quantitative expansion in education, higher education came first, because our first prime minister had a vision that we are quite rightly lagging behind and that we have to catch up. And in the process of catching up, after independence we naturally placed more of our eggs in the higher

education basket. Now thereafter the quantitative expansion in this field down the line has produced a large number of teachers who probably wouldn't have been teachers. Now there is no use in lamenting over it, this is an historical fact, it has happened, we cannot reverse it. But quantity considerations must give way to qualitative considerations. Therefore training becomes a very very important aspect. And in this training there is no escape from taking advantage of technology. I am drawing your specific attention to information and communication technology. Our friends from ISRO, IISc, have indicated how it can be made entirely appropriate and locally relevant. The pilot studies done in Karnataka itself have indicated that through interactive technology with a few good people, good trainers, located at a central spot, it is possible to have a very effective training over trainees distributed over a much larger area. It has been done in Karnataka itself. Two places were tried with the help of ISRO, one was at Karnataka and one was at Madhya Pradesh. Karnataka was slightly advanced but Madhya Pradesh, definitely backward. The interesting feed back that came was that there was no 'transmission loss'. The impact of the master trainer to the trainee and the feedback indicated that the training had succeed. Now this was actually information technology put to use, interactive technology, and I submit Sir, that there is no escape. There are ambitious plans which the government has, to which the sector outside the government I think is very willing to contribute. We need to come together, pool our resources. The Prime Minister has talked about the Vidya Vahini Network. There is no reason why such a network covered by the D-Sats - distributed all over the country by not only UGC, not only All India Council of Technical Education, not only the state Universities, or the National Council of Rural Institute - every one could be participating units in upgrading knowledge in the training of teachers. I submit Sir, that if you have to take into account that in basic education, then we have to take the help of technology, we have gone a long way in our teachers training, because willy nilly we can't just close down these third rate or fourth rate institutions which have come up. They are there, we have to make them effective. If we have to make them effective we have to take hold of the very scarce resources in the shape of trainers we have, good resource persons we have and use them optimally. This I think is extremely important.

The third thing which I feel that has come out in the discussions today is the extreme rigidity in our structure - the institutional structure. The credit system which was mentioned by the Vice Chancellor of Gandhigram University is a very good thing. National open school is trying to experiment with that kind of a system wherein it is entirely possible to conceive of a person who may be of a level of class 8 in Mathematics and may be a level of class 2 in English. But it can be upgraded in his own time and ultimately when he picks up all the credits he gets his eligibility. Now, I think we should actively promote and

encourage such kind of flexibility in picking up knowledge and I emphasise that I mean 'knowledge' and not information. And in that context what Shri. Vora had just mentioned is extremely important. Text books have to be re-written - it is a very sad fact that text books writing is a very very difficult subject. And everybody cannot be a text book writer and we have seen umpteen examples. So, we have to be very selective again, in finding who are the people, who are such resource persons, and encourage them to come up with something which again need not be totally replicated but must be innovatively adopted in various areas. And I think this is extremely important.

So the point mentioned by Dr. Jyotindra Jain about Arts and Crafts is extremely important. I think we have totally neglected it in the rural areas, or the urban areas and I'm talking about average, not certain institutes or schools of excellence. Skills development can be in various forms - it can be artistic, it can be any other form but skills development is not encouraged at all. In the law of averages, it is just weeded out. It has to be encouraged. Sir, having said this, let's come to what you have posed, what message should NCRI adopt to fulfil the above goal? According to me this process which you have started to make NCRI as a think tank is absolutely inescapable and it should be a strong nodal responsibility of the Council, to do it and continue to do it on a long term basis. NCRI according to me should also in its own way encourage innovation in such areas. Now how to do it again. There cannot be a straight jacket formula. But any institution that helps in the promotion of knowledge and wisdom with strong emphasis on rural areas but not necessarily be exclusive to rural areas, could be a member of NCRI. In this process the way NCRI has got together Indian Institute of Science, I perceive in the future, it can have Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management also joining in, because management of education is a very serious business. It cannot be left to novices and amateurs like us. It has to be managed in a very proper manner. All of these to be brought together in this task to act as a prime mover.

For its own funding support, NCRI has to be more critical and must go in for probably those institutes, proven institutes which have done very well and which can act as catalytic agents of the various ideas promoted from time to time. Because your choices will be very limited as availability of funds will be very limited. Therefore you will have to be very critical. And in doing so, it would be not a very popular decision, you would probably have to say to several of those who thought this would mean locating a University in rural areas that it is not a mandate, a real mandate of NCRI. I am afraid when we first got that was the impression created. I think it was to a certain extent our own failing, because we couldn't properly project what led to the establishment of this national council. But I do recall in those days we received requests from several states for setting up rural universities. It was a question

of location that has to be considered to be important and nothing else. It was actually a replication of the same thing - faculty of arts, faculty of science and commerce, but maybe established in a rural area. This bubble needs to be burst. The earlier it is done the better it is, it will save a lot of your headaches and problems.

Coming to the rural development department Sir, I have come to the Dept. not more than 15 days ago. And I speak with the arrogance of a 15 day old. In rural development, I think again there are enormous possibilities of liaising. Now only yesterday I was attending a meeting with NABARD. NABARD has a huge fund at its disposal, what is called the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund. Again NABARD would prefer to go by conventional norms and would think of only irrigation projects or may be at best a well conceived watershed project. I tried to suggest to NABARD that infrastructure could be taken in the widest connotation of the term, and it needs to be done. Because funds are available, there are no rigid guidelines. And therefore there is plenty of scope for innovation. Of course one has to be very careful to see it is not mismanaged or funds given to schemes which are not worth their names, therefore selecting process will have to be critical. But it need not be considered only as rural roads or irrigation. And I am glad to tell you that the NABARD Board of Directors accepted my suggestions. These are some of the things where we could very effectively join hands in not only education, not only rural development but many other agencies. Now education Sir, I firmly believe it has to be distinguished from literacy which enables one to get a job. Now that kind of education is coming from all the governmental agencies, Whether space, science and technology, agriculture, women and child development, all the sectors. And I submit to you Sir, that resources are not the constraints at all. All the various departments for education have enough funds at their disposal. What they lack is not funds but ideas which can be translated into action and not just visions. But very concrete action plans. If NCRI could fill that gap and come up with something, I submit to you again that it is not practical to leave only ideas with the government. It will not be acted upon. So therefore this is the gap that I think NCRI can fill, with collaboration with intellectuals and thinkers and people who have actually played in the field. I am sure if this role is perceived as the role of NCRI, it would be eminently successful. I thank you Sir, for your courtesy, in calling me over to join this consultation.

Thank You.

L.C. JAIN

You have amply rewarded us. And altogether, our exercise today, to use the agriculture terminology, has produced a good harvest. And the challenge upon

us now is to convert these ideas into initiatives and equally the challenge is to shrug off the pessimism that has prevailed that NCRI is dead not alive. But we seem to be not only alive but kicking. And Jawahar is very good at that. He will be with you, around you and collect these ideas. I would like to place on your agenda two things. The total reform of the activities at the primary level, whether it is a health centre or the school, needs to note that the community has no participation. Let alone consideration. This must be changed. And in the building which we occupy now, Krishi Bhawan - the portfolio also includes Panchayat Raj. And we don't have to think about it, the constitution has done the thinking and it has given us two directions. Many of the states complain, and I regard this as an excuse and I say it to them straight to their faces, that the 73rd amendment has been left vague - they have 29 subjects left it to the state. But where the constitution is not vague, it has said that the election to the panchayat will be every five years and if dissolved earlier then within 6 months. Bringing parliament, panchayat and state assemblies in terms of their electoral personalities to be on par. And we have just had a review meet state after state about how they have used all their ingenuity to postpone the election and not have it done. And this state whose hospitality we are enjoying here has even gone over board to defend its decisions by submitting to the high court that the 73rd amendment is not justiciable. It is like Article 40 of the Directorate principle of the state policy. Fortunately the high court judgement policy delivered by them last month is a resolute judgement by the high court of Karnataka saying that this is just specious reasoning - the job is to go and hold the election, so do so.

Now the other part of it, is what subject, what power, what functions need to be given. As the amendment 243 says, the functions or powers to be entrusted to the Panchayat or Nagar Palika will be such as to make them institutions of central government. Now if we have forgotten what self government means, hardly fifty years ago, in all my generation, our school debates were on self government being better than good government. When 99% of the people voted for self government there used to be some electricity in the school and the colleges. Now people are interpreting the constitutional amendment to say it has left us without a government. There are two things, one would say we have a phrase called 'Akalmand ko Ishara kafo'. And the second one is 'Sharafat ka takaza bhi hona chahiye'. The benefit of doubt should go to the constitution but not to those who are trying to interpret it. So on your portfolio if some attention can be given and I am even considering to talk to a lawyer that somewhere courts have given a stay order about the election, whether we can go to the supreme court with an application that they may consider giving general guidance. With regard to income tax cases, those who are delaying or not paying tax have got the court to give a general guide lines,

where stay orders will not be given. But this cannot be done individually. This is something which I want to submit for your consideration.

And the other is a status paper by you that will just take primary health and primary education which are listed in the 29 schedule. You will have a review without your twisting anybody's arm, this is called power of information. Some states will show what they have done. Our friend in Madhya Pradesh is doing something for which we have to praise him. But the melancholy fact that it reveals is that in one year 20,000 villages have applied for schools to be opened there. There was no school whereas the constitution said within 10 years, there would be universalisation of elementary education, and everyone who presides over us takes the oath of office - that I will protect and promote the constitution. That you must not forget - you must read it - '10 years'. There is no other article in the constitution where a time limit has been fixed. The others are according to the means, they say. They have said subject to the means of the society of the state because it is a vast population. But great reform can be brought about. Women and men went to Kerala to see how the panchayats perform. There they showed them what their areas were like. And then they say you cannot do local planning because the planning will be done by others. The greatest capital for development is that people should have a stake, and what we have harvested so far, is that people who do not have a state are at risk. The fact is that as the conscious keepers of the constitution which has guaranteed this civil service its full term, the government needs to be aware. So by the Bill of the 73rd Amendment that people are empowered, at least primary education can be made available. Now in MP the panchayat pradhan said no powers are given to us, they threatened to do self immolation that night. Then they said no, don't do that, we will give you power. And this is the way the government deals. They said out of 29 subjects, we are giving you 16 subjects, you go home; so those chaps went home, and there was no self immolation. But it is the government which is doing self immolation. Because the 16 subjects include care of cremation grounds, but primary schools are for giving lives. That is the contempt with which we are dealing with our constitution. Unless powers are given to these people to manage, the chronic problem which your document calls 'challenge of education' which was present when Rajiv was the Prime Minister, will continue to exist. 2/3rd of the teachers draw salary but they do not teach, 2/3rd of the Primary health workers take salary but they do not treat; teachers don't teach, health workers don't treat, where is the world going to go?

But in Karnataka we found that in the first round of Panchayat, we placed the primary schools and the primary health centres under the panchayat, and within 3 months our evaluation committee which was headed by Dr. K.S.

Krishnaswamy, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank, found that the attendance in the schools improved over 90%. Because the village panchayat said if you don't come and teach, we will not pay your salary. No expenditure was involved, but the optimisation of resource was created. In the 80s, as a member of the Planning Commission. I had estimated we had spent 55,000 cores on Primary education and 18, 000 crores on PHCs. More than 90% of that is on the salary of the profession - you need teachers and doctors so salary is the most important part of it. But they must teach and treat, there is no other way we can control them. But one thing you learn is that you can bring them to control through the panchayat. Possibly it will not be a panacea, things cannot be reversed, but they might be better.

So what I am saying is that whatever we do, if it has to have a wider impact, the management of the system, the relationship with the community, you may not be able to achieve today, but it is very important in making it work one day. I take the liberty of putting that in the agenda, and of saying something about skills and what we call crafts.

In Jaipur, there is a Jaipur Orthopaedic Centre for Dr. Sethi's Jaipur foot. They were importing this for all the disabled people. Then Dr. Sethi said that patients were coming for whom it was not fitting. Dr. Sethi said can't we make it so that it fits for each person? While walking he saw the marble carvers in Jaipur and he invited them to work with him. These marble carvers go to the centre whenever that patient comes and they feel the part - that is the beauty of the craftsman. Then they prepare a mould and thus they make this artificial limb. Our skills are not merely meant for being decorating in the cottage industries emporium. Cottage industries are very important, we have a wonderful way of showing, it is unique only to the craftsmen, a mechanic from IIT will not be able to do with such good skills.

Everything is pretty well placed and I have made a note of them, the shortcomings will be in our capacity to follow up. But we shall endeavour not to fatter, and this goes for all the friends who have taken the trouble to come. This is one of the meeting or consultations which I find has been extremely workman like, a skilled operation. If you take all the constructive ideas from every person, we have twenty ideas on our table, we may have some indigestion, but we shall follow up on them!

Just to remind you one quote from Gandhi before we adjourn, what he said on Education talking of his concepts.

Contemplation of non-violence in relation to the problems of India's millions, had led Gandhiji to the conclusion that the system of education which we needed would have to be such as should

a) able to pay its way.

b) Unable them to provide themselves through their own effort, means for a healthy decent cultural existence.

c) Train not only their intellect but their physical and spiritual faculties as well

And for the teachers:

A basic school teacher must consider himself a universal teacher as soon as he comes in contact with anybody - man or woman, young or old - he should say to himself/herself now, what can I give to this person.

III

SUMMARY

SUMMARY

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REPORT OF THE NCRI CONSULTATION

*20th May, 1999
Bangalore*

THE FOCUS OF THE NCRI CONSULTATION

The consultation at Bangalore was meant to focus on three aspects:

- a) what needs to be done to enrich the general stream of school education - starting from the primary level in the rural areas, from the perspective of basic education?
- b) what measures should NCRI adopt to fulfil the above goal, and what should be the specific/practical guidelines for NCRI, in both the short and long term?
- c) what should be the approach and activities to strengthen existing institutional endeavours/experiments inspired by basic education philosophy; and to assimilate and disseminate widely their experience, treating them as resource centres?

A SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION

At the NCRI consultation, various perspectives on 'Basic Education' were discussed. It was felt that the documentation of previous policy statements on Basic Education over the past fifty years, would be helpful. It was also felt that the term 'Nai Talim' could be appropriately popularised. Basic Education is interpreted differently by different individuals and institutions, and the Gandhian vision encapsulated in using 'Nai Talim' can be easily understood.

The need to base Nai Talim in schools at the local level was emphasised. Subjects can be taught 'outside the classroom,' i.e., through a better understanding of the history and environment immediately surrounding the schools, rather than through textbooks distanced from the lifestyles and realities of children. However, it may be helpful not to dichotomise rural and urban education, as the system as a whole needs to be scrutinised, and the quality of teachers' training improved. The use and appreciation of arts and crafts was mentioned as an important aspect of this. Crafts cannot be taken as inferior to arts, particularly since the learning of a craft is an integral part of some children's

education at home. The use of theatre, as a means of making schools more interesting, and teaching languages and other subjects, was also mentioned.

The importance of the use of science and technology, as part of both the vision of Basic Education, and the institutional structures that support it, was equally emphasised. It was felt that tools and techniques like Remote Sensing, People's Biodiversity Registers and Participatory Learning for Action, help people understand their local environment, and can be used for optimal management of resources. They can also be used effectively as part of the school curriculum, and more technical knowledge and understanding of these tools can be imparted at the university level.

Many participants at the consultation discussed the vision of education for development, and the nuances of the link between economic development and self-sufficiency. While the objectives of education and employment should not be conflated, it was argued, the linking of Basic Education institutions with the Ministry for Rural Development, Agriculture, Science and Technology and so on, would help in the marshalling of resources, both technical and financial. Basic Education needs to equip children with self-esteem as well as productive skills. For those who have not benefited from the already existing system, vocational training was emphasised as a means to create opportunities for educated but unemployed young people, particularly in villages.

A strong focus of the consultation was on institutional structures, both as resource centres and users of Basic Education, like Gandhian institutions and NCRI, as well as those that could be effective support mechanisms for Basic Education at the local level, such as the Panchayati Raj bodies and Mahila Samakhya. It was felt, drawing on the experiences of setting up Panchayati Raj structures in Kerala and Karnataka, that the devolution of functions and powers should not take place in a traditionally incremental fashion. Instead, 35-40% of the State plan has been given to Gram Panchayats, in Kerala's case, or through existing programmes and schemes to Zilla Parishads, in Karnataka. Responsibilities for various development programmes, including schools, have been transferred to these institutions. It is important to note, however, that much of the work done in Kerala reflects the momentum achieved by the original voluntary people's movements for total literacy and the public debate on the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution.

The involvement of training centres as well as the support of NGOs and individuals in the mobilising of people's participation, was thus emphasised. A focus on development and education can be maintained by informing and enthusing villagers through area plans and micro planning, as well as training members of Gram Panchayats. Rural institutions need to be revived in character,

even if keeping within a University system. However, it was reiterated that multi-level planning is required to build a strong structure to a Basic Education system.

It was felt that NCRI would be best suited, therefore, to serve as a 'think tank' that helps in the formulation of a vision of Basic Education, through policy documentation and textbook preparation. The documentation of different institutions that are already practising tenets of Basic Education, would be important. NCRI could also give guidelines to involved institutes, on the three components of Basic Education: administrative, financial and academic. NCRI is also essential as a nodal institution that links agricultural institutions, rural schools and other institutions that can serve as resource centres. Its understanding of Panchayati Raj systems can help create the support required for Basic Education at the local level. It can also help in the linking of education with development, by utilising available local resources, like educated youth and Panchayat members, and increasing vocational training through Government support and rural institutes. The relationship between NCRI and the UGC needs to be clarified, while its association with groups like Gujarat Vidyapith, CAREER, ISRO, NABARD and others, can help NCRI find the institutional structures, tools as well as funds for a more widespread dissemination of the principles of Basic Education.

THE BASIC EDUCATION VISION

Gandhi's vision of life was a composite one, in which education, self-reliance, non-violence and so on were complementary to each other. Basic Education, as he saw it therefore, is not a conformist formula, but a creative process in which a child can learn something about, and from, his or her environment. It requires the participation of all concerned communities, and results in the broadening of minds, rather than the pushing of a set curriculum. (Mr. LC Jain)

Various perspectives, as well as additions, to this vision were discussed at the consultation.

1. The revolutionary nature of Gandhian ideas needs to be unfolded through the understanding of Basic Education (BE), in which social transformation of rural areas is intended through micro planning. For this, NCRI must strive to popularise the term 'Nai Talim,' and create a Status Report on Basic Education. (Prof. R. Parekh)
2. Powerful concepts related to BE have been developed by various Indian and foreign scholars like Nanabhai Bhatt, Manubhai Pancholi, Jagatrambhai Dave Aryanayakam, Acharya Ramamurthy, Ramlal Parikh, Freire, Galbraith, Illich and Schumacher. Within the NCRI, a Study Committee on Nai Talim, as

almost a sub-autonomous body, should be created in order to bring together all such (policy) documentation. The experiences of Basic Education institutes in Gujarat should be documented. (Prof. R. Parikh)

3. In order not to distort the meaning of Basic Education, the term 'University' used in conjunction with rural institutes, should be avoided. (Prof. R. Parikh)
4. It is perhaps fallacious to make too much of a distinction between 'rural' and 'urban'. Talking of a 'system' of education would be better, so that it is not location that is as important, as the average level response to the system. In this case, the success of BE would be measured in terms of wisdom and knowledge, rather than just information. (Mr. P.R. Dasgupta and Mr. J. Jain)
5. BE should be based on the local surroundings as the first educational resource. This would not only make children more productive in their later years, but develop a sense of self-esteem that is of the utmost importance. A sense of intimacy with geography would thus result in viewing the motherland not as a drag, but a provider. (Mr. R. Vora)
6. BE is the only sound method of re-spiritualising a people who have become decadent, destructive and violent. It is therefore essential that NCRI pays attention to disseminating the lessons of BE as widely as possible, so that its intrinsic value is brought out. This would be lost if we thought only in terms of 'projects' of BE. (Mr. R. Vora)
7. A corpus of knowledge could be developed by linking environment and development groups. In fact, it is true that a recent interest in the local has been brought about more by the environmental movement rather than the educational. (Mr. R. Vora)
8. The BE vision needs to incorporate the notion of education for development, particularly in the form of science and technology for development. One of NCRI's most important tasks is to make education and development complementary, not running parallel to each other. (Prof. R. Parikh)
9. For this task, it is essential to improve extension activities, and teacher training. Fieldwork must become an essential aspect of this. (Dr. N. Markandan) The quality, not just the quantity, of teachers needs to be improved. In this process as well, the role of science and technology cannot be neglected. Training should be made entirely locally appropriate, and inter-active technology (used by ISRO in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh) can cover a large area. (Mr. P.R. Dasgupta)

10. An enquiry into the microcosm and local resources should be the basis for writing new textbooks that would incorporate the vision of BE. Innovation and creativity should be encouraged. (Mr. R. Vora, Mr. P.R. Dasgupta, Mr. L.C. Jain)

WAYS TO ENRICH THE BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

In discussing ways in which to enrich Basic Education - its vision and its dissemination - the role of science, technology, arts, crafts and culture was emphasised. Various institutions and individual experiences in these areas were discussed at the consultation.

The role of Science and Technology:

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has been running an ambitious national system of Natural Resource Management through Remote Sensing, from 1983 (Mr. G. Raj). With 5 Remote Sensing Centres - in Bangalore, Jodhpur, Kharagpur, Nagpur and Dehra Dun - ISRO has been able to combine its technological expertise with development activities. Its activities have included a resource survey of the country's drought hit areas and drinking water availability, of urban and forest reserves, watershed management and rural roads' connectivity.

In terms of its contribution and approach to education, ISRO has set up a training institute, the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing. However, the number of trained people this produces is inadequate for the present and planned development activities of ISRO. Therefore it has introduced Remote Sensing as a subject in the UGC curriculum, and now about 12 Universities offer an M.Tech./Ph.D. in Remote Sensing, and 80 offer it as part of their course. In addition, the NCERT syllabus has also introduced concepts of Remote Sensing into geography and physics.

The problem with a country of India's vast size and diverse resources, is that there is no holistic plan for their management. However, Remote Sensing techniques can give relevant information quickly and reliably. ISRO also has extremely good communication facilities. It was therefore proposed, at the consultation, that:

- a) ISRO's linkage with Rural Institutes be intensified. Many Universities are already participating as principal investigators in their programmes, and this is to be encouraged.
- b) The local educational institution can be taken as a partner, and work extended to rural development.

- c) In terms of communication, ISRO proposed that Rural Institutes can be linked through the INSAT satellite system, for better cross-institute resource transfer and consultation.
- d) The suggestion was also made that the 5 regional centres could work with Panchayats in their areas. A documentation of this centre-panchayat interaction would also demonstrate the extent of children's involvement and interest. (Mr. L.C. Jain)

Prof. Madhav Gadgil and his team at the **Centre for Ecological Studies (CES)**, have been working since 1996 on developing a People's Biodiversity Register (PBR). This documents, with the help of village people, what natural resources a village possesses, and who the knowledgeable people and the different user groups are (Mr. H. Bhat). With the help of the World Wildlife Fund, PBRs were conducted across 7 Indian States, focussing on 10 villages in each State.

In each of these PBRs, NGOs as well as educational institutions were involved. Students and teachers worked together to do the village mapping, with the support of the Gram Sabhas. It was found that these village maps are much more accurate and detailed than those available with the Mandal Panchayats or Gram Sabhas. The students involved were also encouraged to help with the process of documentation, which gave them the motivation to keep natural resource management as an ongoing activity in the village.

Reasons and suggestions for the inclusion of the PBR in the BE system were:

- a) The process of documenting the PBR combines education with development so that both schools and Gram Panchayats can take responsibility for their village resources. For example, a PBR in Subramanya helped tribals fight the exploitation of a timber contractor. However, a note of caution, that the information contained in the PBR should not be misused, transported elsewhere or misunderstood, was also added during the consultation (Mr. R. Vora).
- b) PBRs could thus be adopted in both schools and colleges, particularly Rural Institutes. A link with all Panchayati Raj institutions should also be maintained.
- c) As a High School Project, the CES suggests a mini-inventory and monitoring, by school children, of 5-6 varieties of natural resources in their environment. This would help keep them involved in the process of conservation, and improve the knowledge of their surroundings.

The Role of Arts, Crafts and Culture:

An understanding of arts and crafts by a child can lead to what Gandhi called the mind-body development (Mr. J. Jain). This understanding is used at the

National Crafts Museum in Delhi. In terms of its inclusion within the BE vision, it was felt that there should not be a distinction made between either arts and crafts, or rural and urban. These are continuums, and by dichotomising them, there is a tendency to make one superior and the other pedestrian. It is equally important not to deify the term 'tradition' and defile the term 'modernity'. Gandhi did not intend to mean the first to be of a glorious past while the latter refers to a terrible present. All things, including cinema posters, are part of Indian tradition. An important distinction that should be drawn, however, is that between child labour and those children learning crafts at home.

Attention must be paid to the following ways in which crafts should be encouraged within the BE system:

- a) At the Crafts Museum, 75,000 children annually watch demonstrations by craftspeople. Each month a different set of 50 display their craft on the 10 acre complex. However, it is important that such centres are not only based in Delhi and other such metropolitan centres, but are made more local.
- b) Average village schools are not concerned with craft, whereas many elite schools are rapidly including learning crafts in their curriculum or in the extra-curricular options. The (unwritten) knowledge of people must be acknowledged so that trainers and craftspeople can work within their own regions.
- c) With 20 million self-employed people in India, and 25 million dependant on these, it is not possible that all such craftspeople can replicate their skill or teach at institutions. Much of the craft is internalised, but these values have been completely forgotten. The Gandhian system therefore needs to re-calibrated or re-understood in order to incorporate such values and skills.
- d) Without dichotomising tradition and modernity, attention must be paid to innovation and evolution of different traditions. However, institutions must also be made aware that the few students of elite arts and crafts institutes show a distressing lack of knowledge about what materials are traditionally used or what processes are employed by a craftsman.
- e) There must be an understanding of the processes of economic development versus self-sufficiency. In the North-Eastern states, for example, every household has a loom which makes them self-sufficient in clothing; this achievement, however, is not highlighted in our textbooks. On the other hand, the celebrated Pochampalli weavers of Andhra Pradesh suffer great indignities. Whenever money transactions appear in the process of economic growth, self-sufficiency becomes a problem.

- f) It is essential that while acknowledging the skills of craftspeople, we also acknowledge their Intellectual Property Rights. This area has been woefully neglected in India, and craftspeople are not given their due.
- g) In making a distinction between child labour and children learning at home, there must not be an insistence that the child acquires formal education before craftsmanship. If this is done, crafts will die out among families that traditionally possess this knowledge.
- h) Towards this, the National Crafts Museum proposes to adopt village schools, so that the learning of crafts and education is not considered dichotomous. A concrete plan of participation within the BE system could be submitted to the NCRI (Mr. L.C. Jain).

At the end of the millennium, while India will have some young people on par with the rest of the world, it will also have the world's largest out-of-school population. At the India Foundation for the Arts, it is believed that Gandhi may not have paid adequate attention to the productive role of arts and culture in Basic Education. Support is therefore given through arts research and documentation (a data base of people involved with arts and crafts is maintained), collaboration and education (Mr. H. De Souza).

Some methods of enriching the BE system through closer attention to the arts (including crafts and indigenous arts), were mentioned.

- a) Arts and culture should be understood on a much broader level than is presently being done. NGOs and development agencies, in particular, need to pay attention to the 'culture' of a village, as its knowledge base. For example, how to use hand pumps improves the cultural foundation of the village.
- b) Gender issues should be made prominent in this understanding of arts and culture.
- c) A form of the arts like theatre, can be creatively used within the schooling system to prevent a high drop-out rate, which can be due to external compulsions or the sheer boredom of bad schools. Theatre can be used to teach without stress, and has been shown to be particularly effective in increasing students' self-esteem, and in teaching languages.
- d) NGOs and schools need to be aware that the various ways in which the teaching environment has been enlivened through the arts, has been documented and practised widely, abroad. The BE system should also make use of these methods.

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT BASIC EDUCATION

The importance of building up a strong institutional base that can support the BE system, was continually emphasised at the consultation. The institutions that are already practising tenets of BE, like Gujarat Vidyapith, Gandhigram Rural Institute, CAREER and CSV, shared their experiences. It was recommended that NCRI do a documentation and comparison of the different activities of all these institutions.

In addition, structures like the Panchayati Raj system and Mahila Samakhyas were discussed in terms of their ability to incorporate and encourage BE, through their mobilisation of popular support.

Existing Institutions of Basic Education:

Gujarat Vidyapith was set up in 1956 as one of the 21 Rural Institutes that were meant to promote Gandhi's vision of Basic Education (Prof. R. Parikh). It was emphasised that it was a problem that all these institutes had now either become, or were affiliated to, Universities. This took away from their original objectives; one of NCRI's tasks would be to encourage Rural Institutes to retain their original character and goals.

The Gujarat Vidyapith has been associated with various activities of education, including supporting training programmes. Some of its suggestions for supporting BE are:

- a) The Gujarat government is the only one in the country that has allowed voluntary agencies to conduct educational training. Believing that education and development should be complementary, the Gujarat Vidyapith encourages the element of extension services in education. It has been possible to give 75 primary school teachers an understanding of minimum extension services, as part of accessible training: teachers are trained for up to 2 years, with at least 10 months in the field.
- b) An important aspect of the BE system should be the equal recognition of a Post Basic (PB) degree versus one achieved through another system. In Gujarat, the reason for the success of the 34 rural institutes is that the Gujarat government gives them equal recognition. This is required in order not to have a perceived 'glamour' to a University degree. It is also necessary that these institutes do not, therefore, continue to affiliate themselves to Universities.
- c) In reviving Nai Talim as a policy, the Hindustani Talim Sangh also needs to be revived. A training centre for this is as essential as preserving the

intellectual resources of earlier work on BE.

- d) The relationship between the UGC and NCRI needs to be clarified; while the UGC has the recognition, it is the NCRI that has the funds for BE. A lot of dialogue is required for a productive partnership.
- e) Rural institutes need to be revived in their original identity and linked with existing rural schools (5-600 Post Basic schools exist in Gujarat).
- f) As in countries like the UK or the US, the notion of 'community' schools should be encouraged. This would be particularly possible if each Gram Sabha had a strong link and responsibility towards the local school. Programmes and so on, could thus be decided with the local school management.
- g) Already existing rural institutes practising BE, like Gujarat Vidyapith, Gandhigram and CAREER, do not have a good system of inter-communication. This needs to be improved.
- h) Gujarat Vidyapith is presently supporting a legislation in the Gujarat Parliament, on the establishment of a Nai Talim Board that would make Nai Talim the responsibility of this Board, not the department of Education. It would also help in encouraging complementary efforts like the learning of crafts and social reconstruction.
- i) It is also vital that there is linkage between BE, science for development, and the various Rural Development programmes. For this, government support is essential.

The Gandhigram Rural Institute, though a University, has not shed many aspects of the 'rural institute' vision with which it was set up in 1956 (Dr. N. Markandan). It is presently in the form of three legal entities on the same campus: Gandhigram Trust, a Rural Education Trust and the Rural Institute. As a product of the Rural Institute programme, Gandhigram has been trying to improve its present system in many ways.

Some of its activities and objectives are useful for an overall approach to BE.

- a) Gandhigram has introduced a credit system for fieldwork. 12 such credits are required for the attainment of the final degree.
- b) In terms of micro level planning, one student is asked to adopt a Panchayat, and is expected to be present at its monthly meetings. This is particularly relevant to students of the Political Science, Public Administration, Rural Development or Extension programmes. It has been difficult to convene the

meetings, but a process is on to convince the Tamil Nadu government to understand the importance of such meetings.

- c) In a programme to help primary schools, student volunteers visit a school from 3-4 pm every week (there are 10 primary schools in the panchayat). A value-oriented syllabus has been framed in an informal way, including a biography of Mahatma Gandhi, psalms, stories, exercises and meditation.
- d) Training for Panchayats is an important aspect of Gandhigram's activities. The installation of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation Chair for Panchayati Raj, at the institute, has helped in this regard. 10 Panchayat Presidents were taken to Kerala for 3 days, and attended 2 Gram Sabha meetings. There was good press coverage of the feedback they gave upon their return, and they were extremely enthusiastic and inspired by the visit. It was hoped that more such visits, by a greater number of Panchayat Presidents, would be carried out (Mr. L.C. Jain).
- e) A research journal, presently in its third issue, is being brought out to encourage documentation of various experiences, including the extension director's, for example.
- f) Entrepreneurial training of various kinds is being carried out. Masonry, food processing, tailoring and toy making, for example, are all activities that are run at the development centre, along with the government's own programmes.
- g) Gandhigram requested NCRI to help with the spread of experimentation and institution building within Tamil Nadu. Towards this, Gandhian institutions need to be identified for help by the committee to revive Nai Talim.

Under the Visva-Bharati University, the CAREER and CSV institutes have been working at improving science and research activities in the villages around Sriniketan (Mr. J Ghosh and Prof. Basumallick). Both Gandhi and Tagore's vision of a complete life gave support to the approach of education for development. This implies a greater understanding of indigenous knowledge and skill, enhanced with the introduction of modern technology.

The main activities of the Centre for Applied Rural Education, Extension and Research (CAREER) centre have focussed around workshops, materials development and action research. These include:

- a) Sensitising and re-orienting villagers, irrespective of their age-group, to their socio-economic and environmental conditions.
- b) Participatory Learning for Action (PLA) techniques are being used to give

educational inputs to villagers as well as learn from them. 33 villages, including 18 tribal hamlets (a total population of 63,000) are being covered under this programme.

- c) The concept of 'our village' has been popularised by the total literacy movement, and although there is sometimes opposition from the village Pradhans, the people themselves have been enthusiastic participants in resource mapping and micro level planning programmes. This has already covered 159 Gram Panchayats, and 2,300 villages.
- d) CAREER has developed a package of training materials for women - their empowerment and legal rights - which helped train 75-80 newly elected Panchayat members, with the help of the district authorities.

CAREER requested funds from the Dept. of Science and Technology for the use of agri-technology for rural development. It will also submit an Action Plan to NCRI by the end of June.

The Centre for Science in Villages (CSV) has been set up in order to improve literacy and education in villages, teaching through processes of daily living which use science, for example, cooking. It considers that there are three important components of education: administration, financial and academic. In terms of its formal and informal commitment to the academic component, it again considers three tasks:

- a) Fundamental tasks - which include science education, awareness, capacity building and problem solving. This involves, in particular, the promotion of science education at the school level, with an approach based on Tagore's philosophy. It incorporates creativity, the joy of doing things and a visualisation of the global. At the primary level, a nature and society study implies that a student learns about different flowers, plants and insects outside the classroom.
- b) Applied tasks - which include demonstration programmes, field studies and data base creation. This has included the introduction of children to the workings of solar cookers. It is hoped that training of villagers for the low cost fabrication of solar cookers and low cost housing could also be introduced through rural schools.
- c) Research tasks - which include projects for different agencies.

Institutional Structures that can Support BE and Mobilise People's Participation:

The Panchayati Raj system and Mahila Samakhya were both described, at the consultation, as movements and institutional structures that could possibly support BE through a participatory framework.

The Panchayati Raj systems presently being evolved in Kerala and Karnataka, and their relevance to the teaching and dissemination of BE, were discussed. The following important steps were involved in the process of setting up these systems:

- i) In Kerala and Karnataka, a substantial amount, i.e. 35-40% of the State Plan, was earmarked for the Panchayats. In Kerala, a major underlying decision of the Planning Board in 1996, was to give up the incremental approach to decentralisation (Prof. I. Gulati). These funds, therefore, were devolved as a Block Grant to the local body for its own development plans, which were in turn, integrated with the State Plan and approved through legal procedures. In Karnataka, where the system evolved in 1987, the funds were given not as block grants, but as financing of schemes and programmes undertaken by the Zilla Parishad, or district level Panchayati institution (Mr Srinivasamurthy).
- ii) In Kerala, an initial 9 months was spent for the planning process, where Gram Sabhas were convened, and guidelines circulated for the manner of conducting these. In addition, 10-12 discussion groups were set up, along with special groups for the SC/ST, women and resource mobilisation. The Karnataka experience included starting with putting 300,000 functionaries on 'deputation' to the Zilla Parishad, till the administrative and financial control of certain developmental activities could be fully transferred to the elected bodies at local level. Karnataka was the first state to set up an independent State Finance Commission in charge of local bodies.

The Panchayati Raj experiences in both Kerala and Karnataka have strongly emphasised the need for sustainable institutional structures. This is the learning, therefore, that the BE system needs to incorporate.

- a) A cadre of voluntary resource people needs to be set up in order to help support people's participation and keep the 'campaign mode' of any issue alive. In Kerala, it was found that such a cadre of 50,000 voluntary workers (graduates and activists in development activities), could be mobilised through the total literacy movement and the knowledge of the local Panchayati Raj bodies, political parties, NGOs and training institutes of the government. In setting up the Panchayati system, though, it was also realised that this 'campaign mode' requires constant reinforcement and presence: it was not enough to have it through the first year of the system, the arrangement needs to continue on a sustained basis. It was emphasised, however, that Kerala is particularly fortunate in that most people retire to their villages and are able to volunteer their skills and expertise for such issues.

- b) In order to sustain the 'spirit' of any such campaign, it is also necessary to have the simultaneous support of both institutes of the government, like those involved in training and orientation (for instance, the Kerala Institute of Local Administration), as well as of NGOs and other non-governmental institutes involved in development work. (Prof. I. Gulati)
- c) Institutional arrangements, therefore, need to be created early in the setting-up of the system, and sustained not only by personalities or movements, but by local people on a day to day basis (Mr. MR Srinivasamurthy). The process of institutionalisation needs to include clear procedures, adequate training and continued mobilisation of public resources, both financial and human (Prof. I. Gulati and Mr. L.C. Jain).

Mahila Samakhya (MS) is a programme set up, with government support, for the empowerment of women. It works in seven states, including Kerala and Karnataka; in Karnataka it started work in 1989 across seven districts, six of which are in the developmentally deprived districts of the north. MS helps organise women's collectives from amongst the 'poorest of the poor', who suffer the triple oppression of gender, caste and class. (Ms. Revathi Narayanan)

Three experiences, in particular, of MS were shared at the consultation, as aspects which would be relevant to the setting up of the BE system.

- a) MS focuses on social justice in villages through area plans. In Karnataka, for instance, it started a microplanning exercise with the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), where mapping is done of educational levels, liabilities, possibilities and so on, and includes gender disaggregated data like drop out rates for girls. This information is then presented to the Gram Sabhas with an immediate focus on households which are either bigamous, or where women were beaten up or girls had dropped out of school. This leads on to discussions of why women are deprived, particularly of education, and Sanghas are set up at the end of such discussions. Theoretically, these Sangha women are part of the education committee of the village, and have a stake in the divergence between community and education. However, this has not been implemented yet.
- b) Mahila Sikshan Kendras (MSKs) hold bridge courses for young women to pass the 7th or 10th standard examinations, or learn vocational life skills appropriate to BE. These MSKs, therefore, help with the upgradation of basic literacy and numeracy skills and train women standing for Panchayat elections. In addition, natural skills like traditional medicine and herbal remedies are enhanced through training programmes and used for economic advancement.

- c) A strong focus on gender studies is required for BE. An emphasis on gender discrimination as a bar to social justice, and BE/NFE attention to gender sensitisation training, is required. Last year, MS brought out two gender training manuals, including one called 'Kusuma,' rooted in village idiom, which were used as course books for clusters of DPEP training. Simple activities that include an understanding of the differential treatment to a mother and father, sister and brother, the vocabulary used in proverbs or swearing, all help towards gender sensitisation. This form of awareness building could be used in the BE curriculum, which would have a focus on social justice and increase the esteem of poor women.

NCRI's role in the spread of Basic Education and its immediate responsibilities

At the end of the consultation, it was possible to summarise NCRI's role and responsibilities in setting up a BE system, particularly in terms of disseminating the BE vision, and creating institutional arrangements for it.

The Basic Education Vision and NCRI

- i) NCRI is required to be a 'think tank' for the formulation of a vision of Basic Education, through policy documentation and textbook preparation.
- ii) It must strive to popularise the term 'Nai Talim,' and create a Status Report on Basic Education.
- iii) NCRI should endeavour to ensure that either the term 'University' is not used in conjunction with rural institutes, or that within a University system, the spirit in which the rural institutes were originally conceived, is maintained.
- iv) It must work towards establishing the recognition of a BE degree as equivalent to a University one, as is done in Gujarat.
- v) NCRI must clarify its individual role and its relationship with the UGC.
- vi) NCRI should strive not to allow dichotomies of rural and urban, arts and crafts, traditional and modern, to influence the vision of BE. Instead, it should be conceived of as a system in which the local surroundings is regarded as the first educational resource along with the skills and expertise of the local people.
- vii) The notion of education for development, and the link between environment and development, should be emphasised by NCRI.
- viii) The concept of 'community' schools could also be encouraged by NCRI.
- ix) NCRI needs to encourage the use of science and technology, arts, crafts

and culture, in the curriculum and teaching methods of BE. Innovation and creativity need to be encouraged, both for teachers and students.

- x) Teacher training and extension activities are essential to the dissemination of the BE vision, and should be encouraged and enhanced through the support of NCRI.

Immediate or Mid-term Tasks of the NCRI

- i) NCRI needs to evolve guidelines to member institutions, on the three components of Basic Education and the NCRI structure: academic, administrative and financial.
- ii) It needs to prepare a Status Report on Basic Education by collating and summarising all previous policy documentation in this area.
- iii) NCRI's should thereafter create its own policy document on BE, which would clarify its own role and its institutional links.
- iv) It should carry out a comparison/contrast study of existing BE institutions, starting with the three present at the consultation: Gujarat Vidyapith, Gandhigram and CAREER/CSV. A study of the success that Gujarat has had with BE, and the institutional support of voluntary organisations and the government would also be helpful.
- v) It should encourage all the institutions and individuals present at the consultation to give their views on BE, and carry out their own studies of the effectiveness of their programmes (for instance, CSV was asked to do a comparative study on village schools being taught science by them, and those that were not).
- vi) Ideas and practices of existing institutions - like a fieldwork credit system, using theatre for language teaching, etc. - could be disseminated for information to other institutions.
- vii) Innovative and creative textbooks should be commissioned by NCRI.

Institutional Structures and Mechanisms that NCRI could set up and sustain

- i) In order to do popularise Nai Talim, a Study Committee, as a sub-autonomous body, could be created within NCRI in order to bring together all (policy) documentation already available, particularly conceptual papers. The revival of the Hindustani Talim Sangh and a training centre towards this would also be appropriate.
- ii) NCRI must serve as a 'nodal agency' for BE. It must therefore have a data base of all BE institutions as well as those institutions or individuals who

could be resource people or centres for the BE system.

- iii) NCRI should maintain its links with local bodies through existing institutional mechanisms and structures like the Panchayati Raj and Mahila Samakhya.
 - iv) It should encourage member institutions to 'adopt' Panchayats or village schools in their existing programmes. For instance, the Crafts Museum could adopt village schools, or ISRO could be involved with more Panchayats through its projects.
 - v) Communication and visits across resource centres and 'users' of BE should be encouraged. A suggestion that ISRO set up a satellite communication network for rural institutes and other institutions, could be looked at in more detail.
 - vi) Training centres for teachers and institutions of BE are required and should be encouraged by NCRI. The quality, rather than just the quantity of teacher training and extension services should be emphasised. These need not only be government run, but can also be set up by voluntary agencies, as in Gujarat.
 - vii) Panchayats could also become more involved in BE activities through training and awareness visits to other Panchayats and BE institutions.
 - viii) The links between NCRI, its member institutions and the government should be maintained, particularly with the Departments of Education, Rural Development, Agriculture, and Science and Technology. This would help with the implementation of the 'education for development' vision, whereby vocational skills relevant to local needs are encouraged, and employment opportunities are also created. Funding for these activities could be supported through relevant government programmes.
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IV

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